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# THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

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# THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

EDITED BY   
JOHN DRINKWATER

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## FOREWORD

**A**N Outline of Literature properly to fulfil its purpose must itself be literature. It must convey not only the facts, the names, the dates, the relationships, of books and bookmen, but also the glow and enthusiasm imparted by lovers of fine writing who can breathe into the dry bones of their subject the veritable breath of life. None knew better how to do this than the original editor and creator of this book : John Drinkwater. Himself a poet, dramatist, essayist, biographer, scholar and man of letters in the fullest sense of that term, he appreciated the fine quality of other men's writings and understood the craftsmanship which gave them that quality. In his hands there was no danger of an Outline of Literature becoming merely catalogue or factual textbook on the one hand, or vague and unbalanced panegyric on the other. Whatever has happened by way of revision in the intervening years this OUTLINE has always remained fundamentally true to that original conception.

In those first days some specialised phases of the work were entrusted to men whose scholarship and enthusiasm for their particular subjects gave the work the highest authority even at the cost of some loss of synthesis in the style of the writing. Those with experience in these things may, therefore, detect in certain chapters the distinctive note which, say, Granville Barker, that great Shakespearean, brings to a detailed study of the immortal plays ; or, in the chapter on Dickens and Thackeray, may warm to the paradoxical style of G. K. Chesterton, whose brilliant word-play was a vehicle for so much solid truth. Others, too, contributed special and valuable studies in their own fields of Biblical, Classical, or Modern Literature ; or, as edition succeeded edition, added fresh material to bring the work up-to-date. For literature is not a dead thing. Despite wars and revolutions and all the changes and chances of our swiftly moving society, it goes on, even adapts itself to these very changes and so expresses the restless human striving which causes them, as well as the eternal human spirit which lies behind all our living.

Even our knowledge of the long-established literature of the world is subject to subtle change as scholars and historians work upon it. Who would have imagined, for instance, that anything new could be added to



the literary history of the association of Boswell with Johnson? Yet the discovery in recent years of enormous masses of Boswell's papers and writings in two houses in Scotland has entirely revised our estimates and judgments of Boswell and his circle.

So this OUTLINE has been kept up-to-date since Drinkwater's death by careful revision as nearly as possible in the vein of his original. When, therefore, this task of further revision came into my hands it was the literary happenings of the obscure war years and those of the after-war confusion which had to be added. During that dark night of the soul of our civilisation there had been an almost complete changing of the familiar landmarks of literature. Authors had died or gone into exile; libraries and publishing houses had perished; totalitarianism in many countries had closed down upon that freedom of writing for which John Milton once pleaded so eloquently; a world shortage of paper and printing facilities had put many of the world's most famous books out of print, and had fallen like a blight upon new creative writing. More than this, public interest and taste had changed under the compelling power of the political stresses of a world in flux: the novel had declined; the documentary record of the thrilling events of contemporary life and the political book had taken its place. Of the great figures of the Edwardian era only Shaw remained with us; and the years of the war and those first febrile years of the uneasy peace had not been propitious for the establishment of new reputations.

Since the last edition of the OUTLINE the literary scene has shifted again. The demand for educational, technical, and semi-technical books has increased; the ubiquitous paperback is booming, and economic necessity is forcing many publishers to cater for the mass market. And then there is television. It has been claimed, but not proved, that the flickering screen now in most British homes does not encourage children to read: and yet more new books for children are being published than ever before. Television has certainly done much to stimulate interest in the arts and sciences: archæology, for instance, has been brought into people's homes and such interest has obviously encouraged more books on the subject.

Sensitive modern writers are well aware that we are living in a restless, frightened, materialistic world in which many have lost not only their faith but their sense of values. Is it because posterity seems to matter less that more writers tend to work for media through which the largest possible number of people are reached in the shortest possible time? However

much we may regret this trend, there can be no doubt that the type and quality of literature produced in the foreseeable future will be influenced by it.

The OUTLINE endeavours to keep step with these changes and chances. One opportunity for drastic revision occurred in 1950 when the whole work was cast into a new format and the type reset. We were still then in the unstable post-war years, but the shapes were crystallising a little. As Editor I seized the opportunity of making some changes of emphasis, and in subsequent revisions, including this present one, have continued to do so. There is also a continual movement to record as established writers pass away, and new reputations are made.

Whatever is new, however, in judgment or fact, whatever is added or changed, the method and function of the OUTLINE remain what they were when first it appeared : to give the reader a summary of the literature created by the greatest writers of all times, and to place their work in some historical perspective as part of an abiding tradition. Perhaps we should qualify this by the admission that comparatively more space has been given to the work of contemporary or near-contemporary writers than to the great classics of the past ; but this is based on the assumption that lovers of literature will themselves be disproportionately concerned with the books and authors of their own period.

To these ends, I believe, all who have worked on this OUTLINE since first John Drinkwater gave it form would subscribe. It is a record of fact and of faith. Perhaps we could best express that faith in those words of Francis Bacon when, speaking of books, he says they are : " As ships which pass through the vast seas of time and make ages so distant to participate in the wisdom, illuminations and inventions the one of the other," or in that more recent word written by H. G. Wells : " Literature is about life. It is addressed to you personally. So all good books ought to leave you different about life."

In that belief we present again THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE.

THE EDITOR

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# *The Outline of Literature*

## I

### THE FIRST BOOKS IN THE WORLD

#### § 1

**T**HE history of literature really begins long before men learned to write. Dancing was the earliest of the arts. Man danced for joy round his primitive camp-fire after the defeat and slaughter of his enemy. He yelled and shouted as he danced, and gradually the yells and shouts became coherent and caught the measure of the dance, and thus the first war-song was sung. As the idea of God developed, prayers were framed. The songs and the prayers became traditional and were repeated from one generation to another, each generation adding something of its own.

As man slowly grew more civilised, he was compelled to invent some method of writing by three urgent necessities. There were certain things that it was dangerous to forget, and which therefore had to be recorded. It was often necessary to communicate with persons who were some distance away, and it was necessary to protect one's property by marking tools, cattle, and so on, in some distinctive manner. So man taught himself to write, and having learned to write purely for utilitarian reasons, he used this new method for preserving his war-songs and his prayers. Of course, among these ancient peoples, there were only a very few individuals who learned to write, and only a few who could read what was written.

The earliest writing was merely rude scratchings on rocks, and it is supposed that these rock inscriptions were traced by a scribe, and then actually cut by a stonecutter, who probably had no idea of the meaning. Presently, man began to write with a stylus on baked clay tablets. Specimens of these clay books were discovered by Sir Henry Layard in Chaldea. One of them is now in the British Museum, and is an account of the Flood. This is probably the oldest existing example of writing. It was inscribed about the year 4000 B.C., and there is reason to believe that the Hebrews founded the story of the Flood in the Book of Genesis on the Chaldean narrative written thousands of years before the Bible. The Chaldeans used what are called cuneiform characters. The word "cuneiform" is



derived from the Latin *cuneus*, which means a wedge. Each character is composed of a wedge or a combination of wedges written from left to right with a square-pointed stylus.

The Chaldean scribes were in the pay of the court. When the king went to war, the scribe was an important member of his staff. It was his business to note the number of cities captured, the number of enemies killed, and the amount of the spoils, and, incidentally, to accent the prowess of the king. The priests who wrote the Chaldean religious literature also received salaries from the royal treasury. In addition to war records and prayers, Chaldean clay tablets have been found dealing with agriculture, astrology, and politics. It has been suggested that the clay tablets discovered by Layard and other Assyriologists were part of the library of Sennacherib at Nineveh. Sennacherib died in the year 681 B.C.

Egyptian literature is next to the Chaldean in antiquity. The Egyptian books were written on papyrus, a material made from the pith of a reed that grew in the valley of the Nile, with a reed pen made from the stalk of grasses, or from canes and bamboos. The earliest Egyptian book of which we know, *The Book of the Dead*, was written at the time of the building of the Great Pyramid. A copy of *The Book of the Dead* is in the British Museum. Mr. George Putnam describes it as "consisting of invocations to the deities, psalms, prayers, and the descriptions of experiences that awaited the spirit of the departed in the world to come, experiences that included an exhaustive analysis of his past life and his final judgment for his life hereafter."

*The Book of the Dead* is a sort of ritual, and a copy of the book was always placed in the tomb as a safe conduct for the soul on its journey to the world to come. On account of this custom the ancient Egyptian undertakers are, as Mr. Putnam says, the first booksellers known to history. In Egypt the literary idea flourished in the temples, and among the many Egyptian gods was Thoth-Hermes, the Ibis-headed "Lord of the Hall of Books." But while much of the little of ancient Egyptian literature that has come down to us is definitely religious, there was also a court literature in ancient Egypt and a popular literature made up of folk-tales. In the centuries that followed, the Egyptians produced an extensive literature comprising books on religion, morals, law, rhetoric, arithmetic, mensuration, geometry, medicine, books of travel, and, above all, novels. Only a very little of this literature has been preserved, and it is probable that ancient Egyptian literature was not represented even on the shelves at Alexandria, which was entirely a Greek library.

Apart from *The Book of the Dead*, another Egyptian book, *The Precepts of Ptah-Hotep*, is the oldest book in the world. Ptah-Hotep was born in Memphis and he lived about the year 3550 B.C.



The immense age of this oldest book but one may be realised if it be remembered that it was written two thousand years before Moses and two thousand years before the compilation of the Indian *Vedas*. It is two thousand five hundred years older than Homer and Solomon's *Proverbs*. The space of years between Solomon and ourselves is not so great as that between Solomon and Ptah-Hotep.

The precepts were written on a papyrus 23 feet 7 inches by 5 feet  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris. The following is an extract from Mr. Gunn's translation :

Cause not fear among men ; for (this) the God punisheth likewise. For there is a man that saith, " Therein is life " ; and he is bereft of the bread of his mouth. There is a man that saith, " Power (is therein) " ; and he saith, " I seize for myself that which I perceive." Thus a man speaketh, and he is smitten down. It is another that attaineth by giving unto him that hath not. Never hath that which men have prepared for come to pass ; for what the God hath commanded, even that thing cometh to pass. Live, therefore, in the house of kindliness, and men shall come and give gifts of themselves.

If thou be among the guests of a man that is greater than thou, accept that which he giveth thee, putting it to thy lips. If thou look at him that is before thee (thine host), pierce him not with many glances. It is abhorred of the soul to stare at him. Speak not till he address thee ; one knoweth not what may be evil in his opinion. Speak when he questioneth thee ; so shall thy speech be good in his opinion. The noble who sitteth before food divideth it as his soul moveth him ; he giveth unto him that he would favour—it is the custom of the evening meal. It is his soul that guideth his hand. It is the noble that bestoweth, not the underling that attaineth. Thus the eating of bread is under the providence of God ; he is an ignorant man that disputeth it.

If thou be an emissary sent from one noble to another, be exact after the manner of him that sent thee, give his message even as he hath said it. Beware of making enmity by thy words, setting one noble against the other by perverting truth. Overstep it not, neither repeat that which any man, be he prince or peasant, saith in opening the heart ; it is abhorrent to the soul.

## § 2

Hundreds of years before the beginning of European literature, books had been written in China.<sup>1</sup> But Confucius, the great Chinese philosopher, who flourished five hundred years before the birth of Christ, laid the

<sup>1</sup> Writing in China is said to have been invented by the Emperor Fu Hai, about 2800 B.C. He planned the eight symbols for earth, fire, water, etc., and ultimately these multiplied into the vast picture-writing of the Chinese language. On bronzes, jade, bone, and pottery, this language was first used in religious symbolism, and then to record the stories and records, especially of the royal dynasties. It was these annals, folk-tales, poems, and records which Confucius edited and published during the last five years of his life (551-479 B.C.), annotating them with rules of conduct drawn from his own experience as a statesman.



foundation of Chinese literature and ethics. They were written on tablets made from bamboo fibre. Sometimes Chinese tablets were scratched with a sharp stylus, sometimes the words were painted with indian ink. The Chinese also wrote books on silk. Paper was manufactured in China about 100 B.C. The Chinese began to print from solid blocks soon after the birth of Christ, and they were printing from movable type three hundred years before the invention of printing in Europe.

Early Chinese literature was ethical—the collection of traditional wisdom concerning conduct, written in order that men might live happily in this world and be prepared for a better and more satisfactory life in the world to come. The ancient Chinese writer was generally an honoured citizen, and was regarded as an important national asset, but at the beginning of the second century B.C. the Emperor Che-Hwang-ti ordered that all books should be burned except those dealing with medicine and husbandry. This Mr. Putnam says is probably “the most drastic and comprehensive policy for the suppression of a literature that the world has ever seen.” Fortunately many of the ancient songs had been learned by heart and were repeated by public reciters. After the vandal emperor’s death the text was again committed to writing. Though the Chinese author could not look for any income from the circulation of his books, he could rely on receiving a stipend from the State, and in no country has the Government held writers and students in higher honour. In this connection it is interesting to note that one of the earliest successful women writers in the history of literature was a Chinese woman named Pan Chao, who was writing history at the beginning of the Christian era. The ancient literature of China is so extensive and so distinguished that, until the recent Communist revolution, Chinese literature was little more than a series of commentaries on the works of classic authors. The influence of the classic writers on the national life was tremendous, and it made China in all respects the most conservative nation in the world. The Chinese respect for tradition was so great that the production of a modern literature that might rival the ancient literature was regarded as an impious impertinence. Moreover, the devotion to the classic writers prevented any change in the Chinese language since the dawn of history. To read a poem by Chaucer written five hundred years ago, and to note the immense difference between the English of Chaucer and the English of to-day, makes it easy to realise the extraordinary unchangeableness of the Chinese language.

The Indian Vedas, the sacred scriptures of the Sanscrit peoples, were written out at least a thousand years before Christ. Buddha lived towards the end of the sixth century B.C., and his teaching caused the production of an immense Indian theological literature, written either on dressed skins or prepared palm-leaves. The earliest Hebrew books were written about



600 B.C. So far as is known there was no literature in Japan until about a thousand years ago, and in Japan, as in China and in Greece, the public reciters preceded the written book by many centuries.

The Phœnicians, the busy trading Semitic people who lived in the North of Africa, and whose capital, Carthage, was the first commercial capital of the world, first taught the Greeks how to write, and from the Egyptians the Greeks obtained their first idea of bookmaking. The Greek alphabet was evolved, certainly as early as the eighth century B.C. In his *Greek Literature* Jevons says that reading and writing were taught in Greece as early as 500 B.C., in which year there were boys' schools in the island of Chios, and it was generally regarded as shameful not to be able to write and read. Jevons, however, suggests that education in Greece at this time was usually only enough to make a man capable of keeping accounts and of writing to his friends, and that there is no reason to suppose that the Greeks in this early age had acquired the habit of reading books. The Greek public reciters, who flourished before writing became common, were called "rhapsodists," and their custom was to entertain audiences in the open air with a complete recital of the Homeric epics. The rhapsodists travelled from town to town like a modern theatrical company on tour, and the poems and legends that they learned by heart were the stock-in-trade that secured them a living.

Alexandria succeeded Athens as the capital of Greek culture, and the Ptolemies, who were enthusiastic book collectors, endeavoured to collect every available copy of the great Greek masterpieces. There were 700,000 Greek books in the library at Alexandria, which was partly burnt by Julius Cæsar in the year 48 B.C. To-day, nearly two thousand years later, there are only four million books in the British Museum Library. On the shelves at Alexandria, the reader found the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Plato's *Republic*, the writings of Xenophon and Herodotus, the plays of Euripides, Sophocles, Æschylus, and Aristophanes, Euclid's *Geometry*, and many books on mathematics and science which have been entirely lost. It is a remarkable fact that, though the ancients, and particularly the Romans, were expert road-makers, working according to scientific plans, there is in existence no treatise on the ancient art of road-making or on any other branch of ancient engineering. Such books must have been in existence, but they have completely disappeared.

The books in the library at Alexandria were very different things from the books in the British Museum. Most of them were written on papyrus, a material made from the pith of an Egyptian reed, and a few were written on parchment, the use of which had been discovered about a hundred years before the Alexandria library was set on fire. The papyrus book looked very much like a modern map. The matter was written on one side



only, and the papyrus was fastened to a wooden roller, round which it was rolled. Some of these rolls were very long, but the usual habit was to make them comparatively short. The papyrus was generally about a foot in width. The book was written in a series of narrow columns running the full length of the roll, and the columns were from two to three and a half inches wide ; with lines in red ruled between them. Homer's *Iliad* would probably have been written on at least twenty-four different rolls, and there were many copies of the same work in the Alexandria library, so that the actual number of individual books was very much less than the number of rolls. After the book had been written on the papyrus by the scribe, it was ornamented and embellished by a craftsman, who was the prototype of the modern book illustrator. Then the binders received the manuscript, and their business was to cut the margins and smooth the parchment or papyrus. The scroll was then fixed to a wooden roller, and the knobs at the end of the rollers were often decorated with metal ornaments. The manuscripts were written with reed pens in ink made of lamp-black and gum. The back of the book was dyed with saffron, and the rolls were usually wrapped in parchment cases, dyed purple or yellow.

The scribes were, also, the earliest booksellers. They would borrow a manuscript, possibly for a fee, laboriously copy it on their papyrus scrolls and sell the copies. There were many of these scribe-booksellers dwelling in Athens fifty years before the birth of Christ. They had their shops in the market-places, and by the time of Alexander the Great the bookselling trade had become an established institution. The ancient bookseller was not always particularly honest, and it was a common practice to give a modern manuscript the appearance of a rare antique by burying it in a sack of grain until the colour had changed and the papyrus had become worm-eaten.

### § 3

It was in the third century before Christ that Alexandria became the centre of Greek literary activity, and about the same time Roman writers began to create original work in the manner of the Athenians. Perhaps the most famous literary achievement at the beginning of Alexandria's literary history was the translation of the Old Testament into Greek in the version that is known as the Septuagint. According to tradition the translation was made by seventy learned Jewish rabbis. The fact that the papyrus was manufactured in Egypt helped to give Alexandria its importance as a book-producing centre, and its geographical position kept it, to a large extent, outside the constant wars that devastated so large a part of the ancient world. Staffs of expert copyists worked in the great Alexandrian



library under the supervision of authoritative scholars, and the copies they made were distributed throughout the world by the Alexandria booksellers. The prominent literary position of Alexandria continued long after its conquest by the Romans and until Greek ceased to be the fashionable language of the ancient world. Even as late as the fifth century A.D. Alexandria was a centre of culture and learning, a fact which Charles Kingsley has employed with dramatic effect in his novel *Hypatia*.

In its beginning the literature of Rome was a foreign literature. As Rome established itself as the capital of the world, ambitious writers flocked to it from all parts of the world, just as in the eighteenth century they flocked to Paris, but for a very long time Greek remained the literary language. Long after the Roman armies had occupied the whole of the Grecian Peninsula, the cultured Roman read Greek books, bought from Alexandrian copyists. The only parallel to the recognition of Greek as the sole worthy literary language occurred in the eighteenth century when French held much the same position on the continent of Europe, and when Frederick the Great of Prussia amused himself by writing French verse. When a Latin literature began to be produced it was entirely based on Greek models. The Greek plays were translated into Latin, Homer was translated into Latin, and the original Latin work was inevitably imitative. In this connection it is interesting to note that many of the more conspicuous Latin authors, who flourished before the first century B.C., that is to say before the beginning of the golden age of Latin literature, were foreigners and not Romans by birth. The classic period of Latin literature barely lasted a hundred years. Between the year 100 B.C. and the birth of Christ, Cicero, Lucretius, Cæsar, Horace, Virgil, Ovid, and Livy all lived and wrote and died.

In his interesting *The Fascination of Books*, Mr. Joseph Shaylor says :

The Roman libraries and bookshops were the resort of the fashionable as well as of the learned society of this period. At these shops, literary and critical friends met and discussed each new book as it appeared from the copyist. These shops were located in the most frequented places. The titles of new and standard books were exhibited outside the shops as an advertisement. Announcements of works in preparation were made in the same way. The outside box from which cheap books might be collected was also a feature in trade. Many of these old-time customs have their counterpart in the publishing and bookselling of to-day. We read of Cicero desiring to pay for a copy of one of his books which he wished sent to a friend, so that it should not be entered on the register of complimentary copies, and also giving instructions as to the "remainder" of a particular book consisting of a considerable number of copies of which he wished to dispose at a cheap rate.

We are told that the most frequent fate of unsuccessful poetry was to be used for the wrapping up of fish and other goods, while large supplies of surplus



stock found their way from the booksellers to the fires of public baths, a very right way of disposing of them, and a method which modern publishers might often adopt with advantage. Other ancient customs have still their modern significance, such as buying all rights in an MS. A royalty system also existed, and authors were frequently paid in part for their labours by receiving copies of their published book, although by many it was considered degrading to ask for payment for literary work, a form of pride which is not common to-day. As no copyright law was then in existence, books were copied and re-copied immediately upon publication.

Professional writers in ancient Rome depended for their livelihood on the patronage of the wealthy lover of letters, and it is worth noting that what was true in Rome before the birth of Christ remained true of the whole of Europe until the end of the eighteenth century. Horace and Virgil depended on the bounty of Mæcenæ, an enlightened millionaire who regarded the poet as the most useful of all the servants of the State. Centuries afterwards Molière and La Fontaine depended on the bounty of Louis XIV, and English men of letters in the eighteenth century had either to find a patron or to starve.

#### § 4

In the third century A.D. books began to change their form. Instead of being continuous rolls, sheets of calf-skin (parchment) specially prepared for writing upon were folded once down the middle to make a unit of four pages. The successive sheets were then stitched together at the fold and thus made into volumes and bound together in wooden boards, which were generally ornamented and sometimes covered in leather. This new type of book was called a codex, a name originally used for the waxed wooden tablets of the Roman law bound together to form a continuous book. During the Dark Ages, when few new books were written, it was in the monasteries that books found their only safe lodgment and willing hands to copy them. In most monasteries there was a room called the scriptorium where the work of transcribing was carried on. Occasionally some comparatively enlightened layman appreciated the work of these literary monks. The great Charlemagne, for example, granted the rights of hunting to certain monasteries in order that the monks might provide themselves with material for the covers of their books from the skin of the deer. Although in these ten centuries there was little original authorship, there was splendid artistic expression in the ornamentation of manuscripts. The monkish illuminated borders and letters remain things of beauty and delight.

Probably the oldest illuminated manuscript is the Virgil, with its fifty



miniatures on its seventy-six pages of vellum, in the Vatican. Ornamentation and illustration were practised in the first centuries after Christ in Alexandria, and it is probable that Byzantine illumination began there. There were many kinds of illumination in the Middle Ages. The art was patronised by Alfred the Great, and was practised at Winchester and elsewhere in England. Happily, many examples of these beautiful monkish MSS., with their delicately ornamented borders and fine initial letters, have been preserved. The monastery scribes wrote with quill pens. In his interesting book, *Illumination*, Mr. Sidney Farnsworth says that probably the earliest allusion to the quill pen "occurs in the writings of St. Isidore of Seville, who lived in the early part of the seventh century." Quills were, however, in use at a much earlier time, and bronze pens were used by the Romans.

The artistic activities of the monasteries were not by any means universally applauded. One mediæval Puritan, referring to these beautiful manuscripts, said :

Some possess the sacred books and have them as if they had them not. They shut them up in their book chests. They pay attention only to the thinness of the skin and the elegance of the letter. They use them less for reading than for show

The mediæval monks who transcribed manuscripts were generally exonerated from manual labour in the fields.

The volumes in the monastic libraries consisted of pages as accurately and beautifully written as if they were printed. In the Hunterian Museum at Glasgow there is one volume that was always accounted among the printed books, until a curious observer discovered on a certain page that there was a hole in the parchment, and that this hole had been skipped. This, of course, was a proof that the work had been written by a scribe and not printed by a printing press. Writing of monkish manuscripts, Andrew Lang said :

It is one of the charms of the MSS. that they illustrate in their minute way all the art and even the social condition of the period in which they were produced. Apostles, saints, and prophets wear the contemporary costume, and Jonah, when thrown to the hungry whale, wears doublet and trunk hose. The ornaments illustrate the architectural taste of the day. The backgrounds change from diapered patterns to landscapes as newer ways of looking at nature penetrated the monasteries.

In Charles Reade's novel, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, there is a vivid description of the artist-monks of the Middle Ages. One of them says :

A scroll looks but barren unless a border of fruit and leaves and rich arabesques surround the good words and charm the senses as those do the soul and understanding, to say nothing of the pictures of holy men and women departed, with



which the several chapters would be adorned, and not alone the eye soothed with the brave and sweetly blended colours, but the heart lifted by effigies of the saints in glory.

The literary work of the monasteries only came to an end when printing, invented by Gutenberg in the early fifteenth century, gradually superseded it.

## § 5

So far, we have been considering the production and the embellishment of books, but before we proceed to the detailed examination of the great achievements of literature it is necessary to discover the reasons that impelled men from the earliest ages to write books. As we have already seen, as long ago as the birth of Christ the world possessed an elaborate literature which contained supreme examples of every literary form, and we have seen how this literature developed after the invention of writing. Let us endeavour to realise the mentality of prehistoric man living a hard life in a sparsely inhabited and bewildering world. He was continually confronted by phenomena which he could not understand, and by problems to which his ever-increasing intelligence demanded an answer. Andrew Lang has summarised these problems :

What was the origin of the world and of men and of beasts? How came the stars by their arrangement and movements? How are the motions of sun and moon to be accounted for? Why has this tree a red flower and this bird a black mark on its tail? What was the origin of the tribal dances or of this or that law of custom or etiquette?

In finding their answers to these questions, prehistoric men were influenced by the fact that they did not possess our sense of superiority to the rest of creation. They believed that all animals had souls, and that there was personality even in the inanimate. Thus Herodotus tells us that the Egyptians regarded fire as a live beast, and the wind has been universally regarded as a person and the father of children. As Andrew Lang says : "To the savage, sky, sun, sea, wind are not only persons, but they are savage persons." With these beliefs in his mind, the prehistoric man set out to find answers to the problems of the universe, and these answers naturally took the form of a story or what is called a myth. Mythology has provided us with the early mental and spiritual history of our race. When literature came to be created and man started to write, he naturally first wrote down those well-known stories, which had been repeated from generation to generation, each new generation adding something of its own, of the mysteries of life and death and of man's general relation to the world in which he lived. These myths, which form the basis of literature, cover a vast field of speculation. They include myths concerning



the origin of the world and the origin of man ; myths concerning the arts of life, that is to say, stories telling how man learned the use of the bow and the plough, how he learned the art of pottery, and so on ; myths concerning the sun and the moon and the stars ; myths concerning death ; and finally and perhaps most interesting, romantic myths, stories concerned with sex love and the relation between men and women. In all these myths the one common quality is the personality given to animals and to inanimate objects, and this general conception led to the idea that the world was peopled by a vast army of gods acutely and often hostilely interested in human affairs—gods to be worshipped, gods to be placated. Between the myth and the development of the religious idea there is a very intimate connection. The beginning of literature was largely concerned with the records of the deeds of the gods, and, as we have seen, as the religious idea developed and man built temples and constructed a ritual of worship, the temple became in many parts of the world the first home of the book.

There is no more interesting and important fact in human history than the universality of folk-songs and legends. There is an amazing similarity between the subjects of the songs of the East and the songs of the West, and stories are common to all the peoples of the world. Many theories have been devised to explain the wide distribution of myths. It has been suggested that the resemblance is purely accidental, but this is ridiculous. It has been suggested that the stories, common to Indians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Germans, Scandinavians, Russians, and Celts, were known to the ancestors of them all, the Aryan tribes, who lived on the central Asian tablelands before they emigrated westward, in several great waves, to found the European nations. This seems a plausible enough explanation, but it ignores the fact that the stories known to all the Aryan peoples are also, in some instances, known to non-Aryan peoples like the Chinese and the American Indians. Probably the most satisfactory explanation of the universality of myths is that they are the result of universal experience and sentiment. As Andrew Lang has said : " They are the rough produce of the early human mind and are not yet characterised by the differentiations of race and culture. Such myths might spring up anywhere among untutored men and anywhere might survive into civilised literature."

Whatever the explanation may be, the wide distribution of these old-world stories is a most suggestive and interesting fact. It may be worth while giving two examples. The story of Cupid and Psyche is one of the best-known incidents in Greek mythology. Psyche, the youngest daughter of a king, was so beautiful that she excited the jealousy of Venus herself, and the goddess bade her son, Cupid, slay her mortal rival. Cupid stole into Psyche's apartment, but, when he caught sight of her loveliness, he started back in surprise and one of his own arrows entered into his flesh.



He vowed that he would never hurt such beauty and innocence. Shortly afterwards, he became Psyche's lover, visiting her at night, making her promise that she would never attempt to discover his name or to catch a glimpse of his face, and warning her that if she broke her promise he would be compelled to leave her for ever. For a long time she restrained her curiosity, and then one night she lighted her lamp, and gazed in admiration at her sleeping lover. Accidentally she let a drop of oil from the lamp fall on to Cupid's shoulder, and he immediately sprang from the couch and flew through the open window, and Psyche had to suffer many things before her lover was restored to her.

A similar story of a bride who disobeyed the orders of her husband occurs in the Norse legend of Freja and Oddur, and is told in the Indian Vedas of Pururavas and Urvashi. There is also a Welsh and a Zulu form of the same story. The even more familiar Greek story of Diana and Endymion has its versions in other languages. Diana, the goddess of the moon, was driving her milk-white steeds across the heavens, when she caught sight of Endymion, a handsome young shepherd, asleep on the hillside. She bent down and kissed him, and night after night she left her car at the same place for a hasty blissful moment. As Byron has written :

Chaste Artemis, who guides the lunar car,  
The pale nocturnal vigils ever keeping,  
Sped through the silent space from star to star,  
And, blushing, stooped to kiss Endymion sleeping.

After a while, Diana could not bear the thought of Endymion's beauty being lost or marred, so she caused him to fall into an eternal sleep and hid him in a cave never profaned by human presence. This story belongs to the Solar myths, and it is generally supposed that Endymion was the setting sun, at which the moon gazes as she starts on her nightly journey. The same story is known to the Australian aboriginals, perhaps the most backward race in the world, to the Cingalese, and to certain African tribes—always, of course, with local variations.

These myths were the artistic possession of humanity long before the beginning of literature, and they have inspired poets throughout the ages, not only Homer and Ovid, but modern writers like Browning, Hawthorne, Herrick, Longfellow, Meredith, William Morris, Pope, Swinburne, Tennyson, and particularly Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Rossetti. It was to the stories of mythology that the great painters of the Renaissance turned for subjects when Greek learning and Greek culture were restored to Western Europe, and for centuries afterwards sculpture and painting everywhere in Europe echoed these ancient themes, especially in the art of David the official painter of the French Revolution and his followers.



It is of the first importance to note that literature had a co-operative and not an individual beginning. The early stories of the stars, as well as the first songs crooned by mothers to their babies, were handed along from age to age, changed, elaborated, improved, until at last they were scratched on the bark of a tree or elaborately written out on the papyrus. At the same time as men were inventing and elaborating myths they were also accumulating records. As families grew into tribes, and as tribes contended for the best pastures and the best fishing, there were countless opportunities for individual prowess and courageous achievement, and the mighty deeds of the heroes of one generation became in succeeding generations the cherished possessions of their family and their tribe. The stories were repeated with pride, and, as time went on, the actual deeds of the fighting man were picturesquely exaggerated until he came to be regarded either as himself a god or as the chosen protégé of a legion of gods. These individual achievements were intimately associated with the history of the tribes to which the heroes belonged, and, thus, when men first began to write, there was a vast amount of biographical and historical tradition already in existence in the world, known by heart to scores and hundreds of different persons and ready for the scribe permanently to preserve.

But even myths, vast as was the ground they covered, and heroic legends did not exhaust the material ready to the hand of the first man who learned to write. The associated life necessarily leads to accepted custom and convention. It is impossible for a number of individuals to live together in a family or in a tribe without observing certain rules. These rules become more stringent and, at the same time, more interesting when they are associated with certain recurring events. The outstanding events in every human life are birth, death, and marriage, and with each of these certain traditional ceremonies were soon generally observed. The changing seasons also brought with them ceremonies, originally intended for the placation of the gods, and springtime and harvest, the sowing of the seed and the reaping of the crops, became red-letter days in the primitive man's year. These customs and ceremonies also supplied a fertile field for the first scribes. In addition there was ready for them a vast oral collection of nursery stories, closely allied of course with the more terrifying myths, of proverbs and of droll sayings, mostly comments on the familiar incidents of life.

## § 6

Poetry is far older than writing. It has now been established that the folk-songs of the European peoples, still repeated and sung by peasants in



out-of-the-way villages, are an "immemorial inheritance." Andrew Lang says :

Their present form, of course, is relatively recent : in centuries of oral recitation the language altered automatically, but the stock situations and ideas of many romantic ballads are of dateless age and worldwide diffusion.

The very name "ballad" suggests the method by which men first began to arrive at the rhythmical arrangement of words. "Ballad" is derived from the old French verb *baller*, which meant to dance, and the ballad was originally a song sung by a dancer, the words necessarily accompanying the movement. The custom of improvising words to fit a dance still exists in Russia and the Pyrenees, as well as in the popular modern manifestation of the West Indian calypso. Puttenham, an English writer of the sixteenth century, says in his *Art of English Poesie* :

Poesie is more ancient than the artificiall of the Greeks and Latines, and used of the ancient and uncivill who were before all science and civilitie.

These early songs and dances were the first artistic expression of emotion. With them primitive men found (again to quote Andrew Lang) "the appropriate relief of their emotion in moments of high-wrought feeling or on solemn occasions." In addition, therefore, to the stories and legends and myths, the biographies of traditional heroes and the records of families and tribes, the first professional literary man had a store of popular songs to write down on his papyrus, and it is clear that these songs were the beginning of all poetry, poetry having been defined by Mr. Watts-Dunton as "the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmical language." It is important to note that in poetry as well as in prose the initial impulse was absolutely popular. The common dreams and aspirations were the subject of the unknown poets, who gave them a new and greater beauty. This early popular art was followed by the development of a definite poetry of personality, the expression of particular rather than general emotion which was an aristocratic and not a democratic possession. The extent to which the folk-song belonged to the people has been proved by the continuance of its popularity into the centuries of progress and civilisation. In the golden age of Greece and Rome, few men could read and fewer still could write. But most men could sing, and many men could improvise songs. In the dark centuries that followed the fall of the Roman Empire, books had few readers, but songs were still sung. The new learning that came with the Renaissance hardly affected the common people, and the power to read and write has only become general during the last hundred years. But through all the ages the unlettered have possessed a spoken literature of their own—stories and songs, the same in substance as the stories repeated and the



songs sung by primitive tribesmen long before the beginning of historical records.

A great and entertaining literature has been written in recent times upon the similarity of folk-songs and legends ; the stories common to all the peoples of the world ; the amazing similarity between the subjects of the songs of the East and the songs of the West. In these pages it has been sufficient to suggest the origins of romantic literature and to point out the vast store of material that was waiting for the first literary artist. Early literature was therefore the collection of traditional artistic possessions, the first writers selecting, arranging, and beautifying stories and songs that had been familiar to their ancestors for many generations. This fact should be borne in mind by the reader as he begins to consider the monuments of ancient literature, the epics of Homer and the earlier books of the Bible.

## READING LIST

For the early forms of books—i.e. the codex ; writing with the stylus, etc.—see Sir E. Maunde Thompson's *Handbook of Greek and Latin Palæography*, in the International Scientific Series (Kegan Paul).

Consult any good encyclopædia for articles on papyrus, parchment, incunabula, manuscript, cuneiform, hieroglyphic, stylus, etc.

F. A. Mumby's *The Romance of Bookselling* (Chapman & Hall) deals with the history of bookselling and publishing from very early times, including the production of books in ancient Greece, Alexandria, ancient Rome, etc.

H. G. Aldis's *The Printed Book*, in the Cambridge Manuals of Science and Literature (Cambridge University Press).

The following in Messrs. Kegan Paul's series, *Books about Books* :

*Books in Manuscript*, by Falconer Madan ;

*The Binding of Books*, by H. P. Horne ;

*Early Illustrated Books*, by A. W. Pollard.

G. H. Putnam's *Books and their Makers during the Middle Ages* : a Study of the Conditions of the Production and Distribution of Literature from the Fall of the Roman Empire to the Close of the Seventeenth Century, 2 vols. (G. P. Putnam & Sons). Also, by the same author, *Authors and their Public in Ancient Times*.

J. A. Herbert's *Illuminated Manuscripts* (Methuen).

For the early history of Libraries, see Edward Edwards's *Libraries, and the Founders of Libraries* (Trübner & Co., 1864). This includes descriptions



of the Ancient Libraries of Egypt, Greece, the Roman Empire, etc., and also the Monastic Libraries.

Another book is E. C. Richardson's *The Beginnings of Libraries* (Oxford University Press), and the same author's *Biblical Libraries: a Sketch of Library History from 3400 B.C. to A.D. 150* (Oxford University Press).

A very useful little book for the beginner in mythology is Bulfinch's *The Age of Fable* (in Messrs. Dent's Everyman Library).

Among other general books on mythology may be mentioned Sir G. L. Gomme's *Folk-lore as an Historical Science*, in the Antiquary's Books (Methuen).

Hartland's *The Science of Fairy Tales* (Methuen).

W. Y. Evans Wentz, *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries* (Oxford University Press).

Messrs. Dent publish in their Temple Cyclopædic Primers :

Dr. H. Steuding's *Greek and Roman Mythology* ;

Dr. O. L. Jiriczek's *Northern Hero Legends* ;

D. F. Kaufmann's *Northern Mythology*.

Messrs. G. G. Harrap & Co. publish a very useful series on mythology, covering practically the whole field, among which the following volumes may be mentioned :

L. Spence's *An Introduction to Mythology* ;

L. Spence's *Myths and Legends of Ancient Egypt* ;

L. Spence's *Myths and Legends of Babylonia and Assyria* ;

H. A. Guerber's *The Myths of Greece and Rome* ;

H. A. Guerber's *Myths of the Norsemen* ;

H. A. Guerber's *Myths and Legends of the Middle Ages* ;

M. I. Ebbutt's *Hero-Myths and Legends of the British Race* ;

T. W. Rolleston's *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race* ;

Sister Nivedita and Dr. A. Coomaraswamy's *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*.

The Gresham Publishing Co. also have a useful series with the general title of *Myth and Legend in Literature and Art*, which deals with all the main mythologies.

Andrew Lang's articles in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* are invaluable in the study of myths.

Messrs. Macmillan publish Sir J. G. Frazer's classic work, *The Golden Bough: a Study in Magic and Religion*, in twelve volumes. This firm also publishes an excellent abridged edition in one volume.

*Chinese Philosophy in Classical Times*, edited and newly translated by E. R. Hughes (Everyman Library, Dent), excellently covers this important phase of Chinese literature.

*The Legacy of Egypt*, edited by S. R. K. Glanville (Oxford University Press), provides a link with the early history of civilisation : and to civilisation, G. H. Breasted's *Survey of the Ancient World* (Ginn) constitutes a fascinating introduction ; contributory are V. Gordon Childe's *The Dawn of European Civilisation* (Routledge), T. R. Glover's *The Ancient World* (Cambridge University Press), and E. Eyre's " Prehistoric Man," Vol. I. of his *European Civilisation* (Oxford University Press).

But those who genuinely desire to learn much about, and hence to understand thoroughly, the ancient world, must resort to *The Cambridge Ancient History*.

" The Ancient Literatures of Europe," Vol. I of H. B. & N. K. Chadwick's *The Growth of Literature* (Cambridge University Press), is invaluable for many of the literary aspects of this vast subject.

*The Miraculous Birth of Language*, by Prof. A. R. Wilson (Guild Book, or Library edition, by Dent's), is a remarkable study of the origins and significance of speech and writing. The Guild Book edition has a eulogistic introduction by Bernard Shaw.

A well-illustrated pamphlet on *The Book of the Dead* is published by the British Museum.



## II

### HOMER

#### § I

**H**OMER is the greatest of all the epic poets, and he has left us the earliest pictures of European civilisation. Both as poetry and as history the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* hold a place apart in world literature, and it is appalling to think of what would have been the consequences if they had not been preserved. They constituted the Bible of the Greeks in historic times ; thus the philosophers, Plato among them, are constantly quoting lines from them to illustrate a point of morals or to clinch a spiritual argument just as Christians have been in the habit of using scriptural texts. To the Greeks Homer was *the* poet, just as to us the Bible is *the* book ; and they, like us, have often found a deeper significance or a more poignant consolation than was originally intended in plain words which have gathered, in the long succession of time, a charm of association and the added beauty that is memorial. Moreover, these truly great poems, temples open to sunshine and sea-breezes, and built of noble numbers, have been models for the epic in every western age that knew them, or the works that perpetuated their pattern (e.g. Virgil's *Æneid*). It is probable that we should never have had the "artificial epics," as they have been called, of Virgil, Lucan, Dante, Milton, and the rest, if the Homeric poems had been lost. It is even possible that such a loss would have prevented the "grand style" of poetry from being consciously cultivated. But what perhaps illustrates the enormous influence exerted by those happily preserved masterpieces of man's imagination is this strange fact—that even in the workaday world of to-day plain people know the meaning of the adjective "Homeric," though they may not have read a single line of any translation of Homer. We all know what is meant when a speaker or a writer alludes to "Homeric grandeur" or "Homeric laughter," or observes that "even Homer sometimes nods." Furthermore, the chief Homeric characters are known to us all for their predominant qualities : Achilles for his valour, Helen for her beauty, Ulysses for his resourcefulness, Penelope for her faithfulness. Any orator, even if his pedestal be only a soap-box at a street-corner, can use one of these names to point a moral ; they are as familiar on our lips as the names of Hamlet or Pecksniff, Othello or Micawber.

I have spoken, and shall go on speaking, of Homer as a poet, human and indivisible ; this is done "without prejudice," as the lawyers say—that is, without expressing any present opinion as to the way in which the Homeric poems came into being. He or she who wishes to visit the "wide expanse"

That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne,

and to "breathe its pure serene" (the inspired Keats gets the absolutely just word here !), need know nothing whatever about that controversial labyrinth, the Homeric Problem. Indeed, a childlike ignorance of the whole vast discussion started by Wolf's *Prolegomena* (published in 1795) is a real advantage, for it puts the new votary in the position, as it were, of a listener to the recital of the poems in the springtide of historic Hellas when nobody had even begun to doubt whether the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had been created by the same master-poet, the selfsame blind old singer of a later but still beautiful legend, which shows us many cities contending for the honour of being his birthplace. For these poems can be read in verse translations—with joy to the reader—for the story, and to become acquainted with the noble men and women, the not more noble gods and goddesses, who love and hate and fight and speak and live and die in their stirring vicissitudes.

There are no better stories to be found in books ; no personages better worth knowing. In Achilles we have a hero indeed ; lacking the Christian gentleness that is an aureole about Lancelot's bowed head, it is true, but though barbaric in the violence of his anger and his unrestrained sorrow, yet a glorious fighter, a gentleman unafraid of the early doom ordained for him (even his chestnut steed knows all about it), capable of the tenderest compassion and of high-born courtesy to a suppliant enemy. In Ulysses, again, we meet the heroic adventurer, bravely enduring all the toils and terrors of a world that is still wonderland ; a lover of his wife, too, to the end, and unable to find, even in the embraces of an ageless goddess in her garden-close in a fairy isle, any cure for his homesickness—for, if he had no word equivalent to our "home" on his lips, yet he had the thing itself in his much-enduring heart.

Then there are the Homeric women, fair and wise and holy—hardly equalled for noble simplicity in the long galleries of heroic womanhood, from Sophocles to Shakespeare. There is Andromache, the loving young wife and mother who, in losing her chivalrous and valiant Hector, loses all that makes life worth living. There is Penelope, lacking nothing of the gentle dignity of the lady of a great house, even when that house is invaded by turbulent suitors who waste its substance and seduce her serving-women, utterly destroying the kindly discipline of the household ; keeping



under hard trial her beauty and her honour, the respectful affection of her son, Telemachus, and her loyalty to her long-absent lord. Then there is the maiden Nausicaa on the eve of a fair marriage—perfect in her sense of household duties, her virginal delicacy, her charming common sense, her gracious and generous courage. Above all and before all, there is Helen, the innocent cause of the wars of the Greeks and Trojans alike, who is all the more impressive because we see so little of her and because Homer, unlike the makers of mediæval romances, is far too wise to attempt a catalogue of her charms—here is an early example of the “nothing too much” which is the secret of so many triumphs of Greek art! Because of this reticence the beauty of Helen has lived through the ages and made flaming altars of the hearts of innumerable poets.

Almost all our knowledge of Helen's beauty is derived from a few lines in the third book of the *Iliad* where she goes up to the walls of Troy to see the fight between Paris and Menelaus. “So speaking, the goddess put into her heart a longing for her husband of yore and her city and her father and mother. And straightway she veiled herself with white linen, and went forth from her chamber, shedding a great tear.” When the elders of Troy, seated on the wall, saw her coming, softly they spoke to one another winged words: “Small wonder that the Trojans and mailed Greeks should endure pain for many years for such a woman. Strangely like she is in face to some immortal spirit.” The other Trojan women, when Troy fell, became the spoils of the victors, slaves and paramours; Cassandra lost her life, Andromache her little son, as later stories tell. But Helen was restored to her husband and her gleaming palace in Sparta, and we meet her again when Telemachus goes there, in hopes of getting news of his father. She is then once more the fairest of earthly queens, her beauty august as Dian's, and the perfect hostess, as she sits in her golden arras-covered chair and Philo, her hand-maiden, brings her the wonderful silver work-basket on wheels, which she received as a parting gift from Alcandra, wife of the king of Thebes in Egypt. And she recognises Telemachus by his likeness to his father whom she had known so well in the days when, under the compulsion of the Goddess of Love, she belonged to Paris for a season. It is with perfect good breeding that she alludes to the stormy past when, against her will, she was the cause of so much shedding of blood and of tears.

Many other of the Homeric persons live in remembrance, so clearly are their personalities set forth without waste of words; for it is what they *say* and *do*, not any comments of the poet, that defines them for the reader. The crowd, however, the nameless rank-and-file of the contending powers, is hardly a person of the drama, as it would be in an epic written in these democratic days. In the battle-pieces all we perceive of the nameless hosts is the bronzen glow of their harness, the hubbub of their cries, the



storm of their stones—and they fade away into serried insignificance, even when the stage is given up to “man-slayings,” successions of personal combats between the lesser heroes. It is true that, when the Greeks assemble to discuss great questions of military policy, even the fierce, overbearing king of men, Agamemnon, must take heed of the trend of their mass opinion. The beginnings of Greek democracy, which is the root of our own, are here clearly indicated.

But it is seldom indeed that the heroes and the deities trouble themselves about the rank-and-file. Thersites, the only demagogue who does raise his voice in bitter, sneering words—curiously enough, he is a man of very noble ancestry, well-connected even for a Homeric personage—gets thrashed by Ulysses, who has a special dislike for him. The gods and goddesses are altogether human, except that they are immune from death (though not from pain, such as that of a wound) and have power and beauty beyond the lot of mankind. Just as they have had their love-affairs with mortals, gods and goddesses alike, to engender a Helen or an Achilles, so they descend into the press of human battle, to help this or that combatant in a duel or even to fight hand-to-hand themselves. They brag and revile one another before fighting in the very manner of mortals. Mars calls Minerva “dog-fly” before lunging at her with his spear, and when he is laid out by a jagged black stone, which hits him on the neck, and falls, “reaching over seven furlongs as he fell,” the goddess taunts him in most unladylike fashion. Juno calls Diana a “shameless she-dog,” grabs her bow and quiver, beats her sorely with them, and the huntress-deity, “‘full of tears,’ fled like a wood-pigeon.” Even more comical, to modern ideas, is the way Juno uses her charms, putting on her best immortal clothes and ear-rings with three gem stones in them, and borrowing the love-producing embroidered girdle of Venus on pretence of reconciling Oceanus and Tethys, in order to prevent Jove from carrying out the arrangement that the Trojans should win a battle. She also bribes Sleep to come to her husband, when he has had her embraces. She so well succeeds in arousing his passionate admiration that he proceeds to compare her favourably with seven other persons with whom he has had love dealings, before constructing out of a cloud a covert in which he can embrace her unseen. The characters of the deities are as clearly presented by Homer as those of the mortal heroes and heroines. Jove is imperious, genial, impatient, passion-swayed, a bit uxorious; Juno, intent on securing victory for the Greeks, is a diplomatic great lady who knows just when her petulance has exhausted her lord’s patience, and it is necessary to resort to caresses; Apollo, prophet and minister of death, actively enforces his fateful decrees; Minerva is the puissant war-goddess and a patron of art and industry, and also what we should call an excellent woman of business.



This familiarity with the denizens of Olympus, absurd as it seems to us moderns, is really a striking proof that Homer implicitly believed in them as personally engaged in the management of human affairs. The selfsame naïve faith inspires the legends of the Middle Ages in which we find the saints leaving Paradise to take part in the labours and diversions of humble persons, and even the Virgin Mary helping a devout worshipper to meet his (or her) beloved.

## § 2

THE *ILIAD*

The story of Homer's *Iliad* is the story of the Trojan War. The myth begins with a quarrel of the gods. Eris threw among the guests at a wedding feast an apple bearing the inscription "for the fairest." Juno, Venus, and Minerva each claimed the apple, and Jupiter, the god above the gods, decided that Paris, younger son of Priam, king of Troy, should decide between them. It was Venus to whom Paris gave the apple and thus incurred the deadly hatred of the other two goddesses. Soon after his decision had been given, Paris sailed to Greece. He was entertained by Menelaus, king of Sparta, and he repaid the hospitality by making love to his wife, the incomparably beautiful Helen, whom he persuaded to elope with him to Troy. Menelaus called on the other Greek chieftains to aid him in recovering his wife, and after some hesitation the most famous of them, the subtle Ulysses, the hero Achilles, gigantic Ajax, Diomed, Nestor, the oldest of the chiefs, and Agamemnon, the brother of Menelaus, responded to the call. Agamemnon was appointed commander-in-chief of the Greek army. The great leader of the Trojan forces was Priam's elder son, Hector, husband of Andromache, and son of the famous Hecuba. The gods took sides in the contest. Juno and Minerva were naturally for the Greeks and against the Trojans, while Venus and Mars were on the other side. Neptune favoured the Greeks, and Jupiter and Apollo were neutral. The war had lasted for nine years when a quarrel occurred between Achilles and Agamemnon—and here the story of the *Iliad* begins.

It is the anger, not the valour, of Achilles which is the unifying motive of the *Iliad*. The "wraths" or feuds of heroes are common themes in Greek legends, as in those of the Scandinavian peoples. It was decreed, we are told in the first few lines, that innumerable ills should visit the Greeks, camped before Troy, because of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, the leader of the host. The camp was afflicted with a deadly pestilence, and, when Calchas, the seer, was asked to discover the cause, he tells Agamemnon that Apollo has been launching his envenomed arrows



because of the king's refusal to ransom the daughter of Chryses, his priest, in a city the Greeks had taken and sacked, sharing the women and other spoil. Agamemnon yields the maiden, and tyrannically deprives Achilles of Briseis, his share of the captured women. Achilles returns to his tent and ship in bitter anger, and implores Thetis, his goddess mother, to bring the vengeance of heaven on the tyrant. Jove is loath to offend his wife, who is on the side of the Greeks, and sends a dream messenger to Agamemnon, counselling him to prepare battle against the Trojans in certain hope that it will bring about the fall of the city, which has already been besieged for ten years.

There is much high debate, both in the Greek camp and in the heavenly court, in the first two books, the second of which ends with a roll-call of the forces on either side. Thus early we notice the action shifting from earth to heaven and back again. Also this peculiarity of the speeches is apparent; they faithfully express the general characters of the speakers, whether human or divine, but there are none of the little intimate touches which modern writers employ to reveal individuality. This is a characteristic of Greek oratory in all ages, even to-day, and it is one of many proofs that the Greek genius refrains from personal detail, which might obscure the general effect, in all matters of art.

In the absence of Achilles the long battle goes against the Greeks, though their more famous champions perform many valiant deeds. The Olympians anxiously follow the course of the struggle, each of them doing what he or she can to help this side or that and to rescue special favourites. There are many dramatic full-length episodes of man-to-man fighting; the background of the narrative is coloured crimson and bronzen, as it were, with man-slayings. Paris challenges the Greek princes and is vanquished by Menelaus, but rescued by Venus, who threatens Helen that she will cause both hosts to wreak vengeance on her if she persists in refusing her embraces to her cowardly paramour. A truce between the armies is violated by Pandarus, who wounds Menelaus with an arrow. Diomed slays a number of the minor champions of Troy, including the treacherous Pandarus, wounds first Venus and then Mars—vain victories for which, as later legends aver, he paid with his life. The Greeks more than hold their own until Hector arms himself and takes part in the fray. There is a set duel ending in a draw, so to speak, between Hector and the greater Ajax (whom the lesser Ajax follows through legend, faithful as a shadow), and they exchange chivalrous words and gifts at parting. The action then shifts to "many-ridg'd Olympus," where Jove forbids all interference on the part of the other gods and goddesses, foretelling later on the misfortunes that await the Greeks. Hector at once prepares his host for an attack on the Greek camp in the morning. And that very night, the besieging forces



being visited by "Panic, companion of Chill Fear," Ulysses, Phœnix, and Ajax go to Achilles to arrange a reconciliation, offering on behalf of Agamemnon to restore the still unravished Briseis (poor "maid of Brisa"! thrown from hand to hand, she has no name of her own!), to give him one of the king's three daughters in marriage, without requiring him to make a settlement on her, and to add to the other gifts seven fair cities. Achilles refuses in a speech which is the supreme climax of the Homeric oratory.

The translation is by Alexander Pope :

O soul of battles, and thy people's guide !  
 (To Ajax thus the first of Greeks replied)  
 Well hast thou spoke ; but at the tyrant's name  
 My rage rekindles, and my soul's on flame :  
 'Tis just resentment, and becomes the brave ;  
 Disgraced, dishonour'd, like the vilest slave !  
 Return, then, heroes ! and our answer bear,  
 The glorious combat is no more my care ;  
 Not till, amidst yon sinking navy slain,  
 The blood of Greeks shall dye the sable main ;  
 Not till the flames, by Hector's fury thrown,  
 Consume your vessels, and approach my own ;  
 Just there, the impetuous homicide shall stand,  
 There cease his battle, and there feel our hand.

It is an eventful night. Diomed and Ulysses enter the Trojan camp in the darkness, slaying Rhesus and taking his snow-white steeds. This is a thrilling exploit, wonderfully well told. But, led by Hector, the Trojans are irresistible, and even Neptune could not have saved the Greek camp from capture but for the love-stratagem of Juno. Perhaps the real "moral" of the *Iliad* is to be expressed in the lines :

Two things greater than all things are :  
 One is Love, the other is War.

The great turning-point in the tremendous drama, which stirs heaven as profoundly as earth, comes when Patroclus intervenes, wearing the armour of Achilles and leading his Myrmidons to battle. Hector kills Patroclus and a nobler "wrath" lifts the epic to a loftier range of emotion. Even the Greek critics, trained in the higher and more intense life of Greek tragedy, have seen that anger at the loss of a girl slave was an inadequate motive for "sulking in one's tent" ; only the sublime genius of Homer could have carried it off so well.

Achilles is wild with anger and grief at the death of his dearest comrade ; the loss of his armour (equivalent to the loss of his guns by a modern soldier) touches him in his honour as a warrior. Vulcan, at the request of Thetis, forges for the hero a new suit of harness ; the description of the shield is

one of the most famous passages in Homer and, now we know so much of Mycenæan art, a priceless piece of historical evidence.

The translation is by Ernest Myers :

First fashioned he a shield great and strong, adorning it all over, and set thereto a shining rim, triple, bright-glancing, and therefrom a silver baldrick. Five were the folds of the shield itself ; and therein fashioned he much cunning work from his wise heart.

There wrought he the earth, and the heavens, and the sea, and the unwearying sun, and the moon waxing to the full, and the signs every one wherewith the heavens are crowned, Pleiades and Hyads and Orion's might, and the Bear that men call also the Wain, her that turneth in her place, and watcheth Orion, and alone hath no part in the baths of Ocean.

Also he fashioned therein two fair cities of mortal men. In the one were espousals and marriage feasts, and beneath the blaze of torches they were leading the brides from their chambers through the city, and loud rose the bridal song. And young men were whirling in the dance, and among them flutes and viols sounded high ; and the women standing each at her door were marvelling. But the folk were gathered in the assembly place ; for there a strife was arisen, two men striving about the blood-price of a man slain ; the one claimed to pay full atonement, expounding to the people, but the other denied him and would take naught ; and both were fain to receive arbitrament at the hand of a daysman. And the folk were cheering both, as they took part on either side. And heralds kept order among the folk, while the elders on polished stones were sitting in the sacred circle, and holding in their hands staves from the loud-voiced heralds. Then before the people they rose up and gave judgment each in turn. And in the midst lay two talents of gold, to be given unto him who should plead among them most righteously.

This is only part of the decoration of this famous shield. No wonder that when Vulcan had finished his task and had given it to the goddess Thetis, the mother of Achilles, " she like a falcon sprang down from snowy Olympus bearing from Vulcan the glittering arms."

Achilles is reconciled to Agamemnon and, clad in his new armour, leads out the Myrmidons to battle, slaying many Trojan champions but seeking solely the life of Hector.

So packed is the narrative that it is no more possible to indicate here every important incident<sup>1</sup> than it would be to exhibit the characters and careers of, say, all Thackeray's people in a brief abstract. Let me give a "close-up," as it were, of the most tragical episode of Hector's death at the ruthless hands of Achilles.

Hector, "bound by deadly Fate," stands before the walls of Troy at the Scæan Gate. His old father, Priam, is on the walls ; he sees Achilles rushing on "like the star that rises in harvest-time"—the Hound of Orion

<sup>1</sup> There are 15,673 lines in the *Iliad*, 12,889 in the *Odyssey* ; and something vital is said or done in 90 per cent. of these lines.



that brings fever on men. Both Priam and Hecuba implore their son to come within the walls, but he is deaf to their entreaties.

Achilles draws nigh and Hector awaits him, like a mountain serpent in his den, full of poison and full of wrath. But when Achilles is on him, his bronzen armour ablaze, the sense of doom overawes him and he takes to flight. Achilles pursues him round the walls of Troy, like a falcon pursuing a dove. All the Olympians are watching the twain; Jove asks—Shall we save Hector or allow Achilles to slay him? Minerva protests against the idea of saving a mortal doomed long ago by destiny. At the third circuit of the walls, as Jove “hung his golden balances and set in them two lots of drear death,” one for either combatant, Hector’s scale sinks and from that moment nobody, not even Apollo, can save him. Minerva, who darted down to the battlefield, assumes the form of Deiphobus, Hector’s brother, and pretends she has come to help him. Thus heartened, Hector turns to defy Achilles to combat. Before fighting he proposes a chivalrous pact: that, whichever of them falls, the other shall restore his body to receive the funeral rites due from his friends. Achilles refuses sternly; there can be no pact between them, any more than between men and lions or wolves and sheep.

Achilles hurls his spear; Hector crouches, and it flies over his head; Minerva, unseen of Hector, restores it to the Greek hero. Hector hurls his spear, but misses; he calls to Deiphobus for a second spear. But Deiphobus has vanished, and it flashes on Hector that Minerva has played him false. He knows his doom is on him, but draws his sword and attacks his foe, hoping to do something memorable before he dies. Achilles mortally wounds him with a spear-thrust in the neck; fallen and dying he implores the victor not to let his body be devoured by dogs from the Greek ships. Achilles, his hate unsated, will brook no thought of ransom for the corpse: “would that my heart’s desire,” he replies, “could bid me carve thy flesh and eat it now, for the evil thou hast done me.”

To whom thus Hector of the glancing helm,  
Dying: “I know thee well; nor did I hope  
To change thy purpose; iron is thy soul.  
But see that on thy head I bring not down  
The wrath of Heaven, when by the Scæan Gate  
The hand of Paris, with Apollo’s aid,  
Brave warrior as thou art, shall strike thee down.”

Even as he speaks, he dies and his spirit passes to the viewless shades. Achilles foully misuses his body, piercing the feet, and binding them to his chariot with leathern thongs, and trailing the noble head in the dust, as he drives at breakneck speed back to the Greek camp.



It is not the end. The funeral rites are paid to Patroclus and games held in his honour. Then, cured of his madness of sorrow and wrath, Achilles repents of his desecration of a noble enemy's corpse, and receives Priam with kindness and reverence, granting withal an eleven days' truce while the funeral rites are rendered to Hector. Yet the Greeks of the days to come, with their bitter loathing of any insult to the bodies of the dead (which Hesiod includes in his list of the five deadly sins), never quite forgave Achilles for his brutal and barbarian frenzy. Tragical though his life was, overshadowed by the certainty of death in his prime, he was never made the hero of a Greek tragedy.

The *Iliad* finishes with the funeral of "Hector, tamer of horses." Andromache, his stricken wife, is the real heroine of the story. Troy is destroyed by the Greeks, but amid the clamour of the men of war the reader hears "the far-off echo of a woman's sigh." There is no mention in the *Iliad* of the deaths of Achilles and Paris. But both were killed during the siege. In the *Odyssey* the ashes of Achilles are said to have been buried in a golden urn, and Sophocles tells us that Paris was mortally wounded by Philoctetes just before the capture of Troy.

## § 3

## THE WANDERINGS OF ULYSSES

The *Odyssey* is the story of the wanderings of Ulysses after the fall of Troy and the victory of the Greek host. Menelaus had recovered his wife, Helen, and she had returned with him to Sparta. The other Greek heroes had also gone home, all but Ulysses, whose wife Penelope with their son Telemachus waited with anxious hearts in his kingdom of Ithaca.

There is not the electrical atmosphere of doom in the *Odyssey* which at times affects the reader of the *Iliad* like the imminence of a thunderstorm. When Bentley said that the former was written for women and the latter for men he put into definite words an indefinable feeling which occurs to all careful students of Homer; except for one atrocious episode of revenge and torture, the manners of the people in the story of Ulysses' wanderings are milder and there is far more of what may be called domestic interest. Indeed, it is difficult not to feel that the *Odyssey* was written in a later and more civilised age, or at any rate at a period when the uncivilising effects of a great war had passed away, and those who are faithful to the old idea that they were both the work of one poet, will believe that he composed the *Iliad* in the fierce prime of life and the *Odyssey* in his serene old age. The temperamental gap between the two poems is far greater than that between *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.



The *Odyssey* falls so naturally into six sections, each consisting of four books, that it seems to have been so designed by the author. The first section is mainly concerned with the trouble Telemachus, the wandering hero's only son, has with the suitors for his mother Penelope's hand and goodly estate, and his journey to Pylos and Sparta in quest of news of his lost father.

Ten years had passed since the sacking of Troy, and nothing had been heard at home of Ulysses' fate. He had failed to bring his men back to rocky Ithaca, for they had perished through their folly in killing and eating the oxen of the Sun, and he himself had been cast away on a lonely isle, the abode of the nymph Calypso. She wanted him to forget his mortal wife and marry her, and to that intent had kept him in her wondrous island all the while. Neptune, who had never forgiven Ulysses for killing his ogre of a son, Polyphemus, happening to be away on a visit to the Ethiopians, "the utmost of mankind," the other Olympians get together and arrange Ulysses' return home. Mercury is sent to tell Calypso of the decision, while Minerva appears in disguise to Telemachus and advises him to seek news of his father from his father's friends, Nestor and Menelaus.

The next day Telemachus sends the criers round the town to summon an assembly to hear his complaints of his mother's suitors who are eating him out of house and home. Antinous, the bully of the suitors, blames Penelope for all the trouble; she had sent beguiling messages to every one of them, and had for nearly four years tricked them with the weaving of a pall she said was for Laertes (the father of Ulysses, and a very old and weary man), working by day and undoing the work at night. The other suitors are insolent, but Minerva in a new disguise presents herself as Mentor, and gets Telemachus the ship he requires for his voyage. So he visits Nestor at Pylos, who tells him about the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra, but has no news of his father. Nestor advises him to go to Sparta and see if Menelaus knows anything. He and the son of his wise old host, Pisistratus, set out for Lacedaemon in a chariot and pair. At Sparta Helen recognises him, and they all weep over the great days that have been. It is a joy to the young men (yes, and to every reader) to see the ever-beautiful Helen, and to hear what she and her husband have to say. The latter tells the company how, when the famous Wooden Horse had been brought into Troy, Helen walked round it, striking the hollow ambush with her hand and imitating the voice of each Greek prince's wife—so faithfully that, but for the example of restraint shown by Ulysses, some of them would have answered back or even leapt out of the horse. What is more to the purpose, Menelaus tells Telemachus that his father is in Calypso's lonely isle; which information, with other facts about the



unhappy adventures of the Greek heroes, Menelaus had obtained by disguising himself as a seal and seizing Proteus, seer of the deep, and holding him tight as he variously disguised himself (as lion, dragon, panther, boar, a limpid stream, a shady tree), until the "Old Man of the Sea" was tired and compelled to answer questions.

The next two sections deal with the wondrous adventures of Ulysses. The fair Calypso obeys the behest of Olympus and allows Ulysses to go; though she cannot understand why he wants to leave one who is so much better-looking than his wife and undergo more hardship on the stormy seas. However, she lends him the tools to build a ship and equips him, and so Ulysses sails off to Phæacia, keeping the Great Bear on the left as the Nymph enjoins. Neptune, however, on his way back from the Ethiopians, spies him, guesses that the other deities have stolen a march on him, and stirs the sea with his trident and raises a terrible storm. Ulysses is washed overboard, but Ino, in the guise of a seagull, lends him her magic veil, which keeps him up till he can swim ashore, when he throws the veil into the sea for Ino to catch it. So he comes to Phæacia, is helped by Nausicaa, daughter of King Alcinous, and hospitably entertained in the king's wonderful palace standing in its glorious garden full of fruit trees, vines, and flowers in bloom all the year round.

Ulysses has been cast up on the shore of Phæacia unkempt and naked. And when he is met by Nausicaa, her servant-maids take to their heels. But the princess is kind and sensible. She gives him clothes and food and directs him to her father's palace. The quotation is from Butcher and Lang's translation :

When thou art within the shadow of the halls and the court, pass quickly through the great chamber, till thou comest to my mother, who sits at the hearth in the light of the fire, weaving yarn of sea-purple stain, a wonder to behold. Her chair is leaned against a pillar, and her maidens sit behind her. And there my father's throne leans close to hers, wherein he sits and drinks his wine, like an immortal. Pass thou by him, and cast thy hands about my mother's knees, that thou mayest see quickly and with joy the day of thy returning, even if thou art from a very far country. If but her heart be kindly disposed toward thee, then is there hope that thou shalt see thy friends, and come to thy well-built house, and to thine own country.

The Phæacians hold games and a great feast in honour of their guest and give him presents—garments and a talent of gold to begin with—so that he can eat his supper with a glad heart. At the feast Demodocus sings the Sack of Troy and the Sally of the Greeks from the Wooden Horse, and Ulysses is so affected that he sheds tears which are perceived only by King Alcinous, who makes a speech and says the stranger ought to tell them his name. He tells his name, his home, and his amazing adventures



since leaving Troy. He has sacked the city of the Cicones ; he has visited the land of the lotus-eaters, where some of his men wished to tarry. " Whosoever of them did eat the honey-sweet fruit of the lotus, had no more wish to bring tidings nor to come back, but there he chose to abide with the lotus-eating men, ever feeding on the lotus and forgetful of his homeward way." He has met the fearsome one-eyed Cyclops, Polyphemus, from whom he and his men escaped bound under the bellies of the ogre's sheep. He has visited Æolus, who dwelt " in a floating island," from whom he received a fair wind as a present with all the other winds in the world tied up in a bag. Unfortunately his men untied the bag and his ship was driven back to Æolus, who this time refused to receive him. He has been to the isle of Ææa, where Circe turned his men into swine. Fortunately, as Ulysses hurried through the sacred glades in the endeavour to rescue his followers, he met the god Mercury, " in the likeness of a young man with the first down on his lip," and the god gave him a herb " black at the root, but the flower was like to milk," which saved him from Circe's enchantment. With her he stayed a year and then he once more began his wanderings, his men again in human form. But the climax of all these tremendous adventures is the descent into Hades, where Ulysses talks with Tiresias, the seer, and is told of the manner of his end : " Death shall come to you very gently from the sea and shall take you when you are full of years and peace of mind." He also talks with the ghost of his mother, and hears what is happening to his wife and son and old father in Ithaca. Then Proserpine sends up the ghosts of the wives and the daughters of great kings and heroes of old time, and he makes each of them tell her story. Then he converses with the ghost of Agamemnon, who warns him not to be too open with his own wife, and of Achilles, who hears about the brave conduct of his son, Neoptolemus, in the Wooden Horse, and strides off over a meadow of asphodel, exulting in the lad's prowess. He sees Minos with his golden sceptre judging the dead ; he sees Tityus, Tantalus, and Sisyphus enduring their everlasting punishments. He gazes on the mighty Hercules, bow in hand and arrow on the string, wearing about his breast his golden pictured belt.

After leaving Hades, Ulysses and his men came to the narrow strait where " on the one hand Scylla and on the other mighty Charybdis in terrible wise sucked down the salt sea water." Ulysses thus describes his last adventure :

I kept pacing through my ship, till the surge loosened the sides from the keel, and the wave swept her along stript of her tackling, and brake her mast clean off at the keel. Now the backstay fashioned of an oxhide had been flung thereon ; therewith I lashed together both keel and mast, and sitting thereon I was borne by the ruinous winds.



Then verily the West Wind ceased to blow with a rushing storm, and swiftly withal the South Wind came, bringing sorrow to my soul, that so I might again measure back that space of sea, the way to deadly Charybdis. All the night was I borne, but with the rising of the sun I came to the rock of Scylla, and to dread Charybdis. Now she had sucked down her salt sea water, when I was swung up on high to the tall fig-tree, whereto I clung like a bat, and could find no sure rest for my feet nor place to stand, for the roots spread far below and the branches hung aloft out of reach, long and large, and overshadowed Charybdis. Steadfast I clung till she should spew forth mast and keel again; and late they came to my desire. . . . And I let myself drop down hands and feet, and plunged heavily in the midst of the waters beyond the long timbers, and sitting on these I rowed hard with my hands. . . . Thence for nine days was I borne, and on the tenth night the gods brought me nigh to the isle of Ogygia.

After he finished his story King Alcinous sends him to Ithaca with all his presents in one of the Phæacian ships that were so clever they could have found the way by themselves. So we return with him to a workaday world, where he must tread warily to escape being slain with his son by his wife's suitors. The sections that follow are the least enthralling portion of the Homeric epics. Only his old dog recognises him at sight; and cannot follow and fawn on him, for he dies in the moment of recognition. Ulysses enters his house as a beggar and undergoes many humiliations, for unfaithful servants insult him and the suitors have little of that respect for a suppliant guest, which recognises that courtesy is the better part of charity, and is the most beautiful and homely thing in the life of the Homeric world. The irony of circumstances has its poignant moments when the destined avenger, the inexorable and irresistible warrior, is treated as a vagabond while he is preparing his plot for the destruction of the spoilers of his household—men who are blind to heaven's warnings and insolently ignore the heaven-descended rules of hospitality. When the reckoning comes, it is not a battle, but a massacre; and the vengeance Ulysses and Telemachus wreak on the unfaithful servants is an instance of "the disgusting" which the Greek dramatists abhorred as inhuman, inartistic, un-Greek. Yet the suitors were held to be punished according to their deserts, for the ill-treatment of a suppliant is one of Hesiod's five deadly sins. Ulysses and Penelope are locked in one another's arms at last, and Minerva miraculously prolongs the first night of tears and rejoicing after so many long years of hardship and sadness.

This is the story of the *Odyssey*. And after three thousand years when men read it,

They hear like ocean on a western beach  
The surge and thunder of the *Odyssey*.

## § 4

## ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

None of the English translations of Homer has been completely successful ; naturally and necessarily so, because the unique distinction of the Homeric epics is that they combine the freshness and simplicity of a primitive race, of a phase of the world's childhood, with a perfect technique of expression, a complete mastery of thought over its medium. This combination, as Matthew Arnold pointed out in his book *On Translating Homer*, involves the four chief qualities of the Homeric style : rapidity ; directness of thought ; plainness of diction ; and nobleness. No translation, whether in verse or prose, has yet succeeded in keeping all these four qualities throughout.

Prose translations, however faithful and well-written, cannot possibly give a just impression of the poetical beauty and grandeur of the Homeric poems. The translations by famous English poets have their merits as well as their demerits ; all of them fail to keep one or more of the characteristic Homeric qualities. Chapman's has several of these qualities ; his fourteen-syllable line has something of the weight and movement of the Homeric hexameter ; his style is plain-spoken, fresh, vigorous, and to a certain extent rapid. On the whole, it seems to deserve the noble sonnet Keats wrote in its honour. But it is full of the extravagance and fantastical humour of the Elizabethan age, and that painstaking reverence which prevented the translators of the Bible from giving rein to their fancy did not debar Chapman from "tormenting" the plain and direct thought of Homer. In Hector's famous speech at his parting from Andromache, Homer makes him say : "Nor does my own heart so bid me (to keep safe behind the walls) since I have learned to be staunch always, and to fight among the foremost of the Trojans, busy on behalf of my father's great glory and my own." In Chapman's version these plain, straightforward thoughts become :

The spirit I first did breathe  
Did never teach me this ; much less, since the contempt of death  
Was settled in me, *and my mind knew what a worthy was,*  
*Whose office is to lead in fight, and give no danger pass*  
*Without improvement. In this fire must Hector's trial shine :*  
*Here must his country, father, friends, be in him made divine.*

See how it is all teased out into Elizabethan fantastic subtlety ! Hector goes on to say : "For well I know this in my mind and in my



heart, the day will be when sacred Troy shall perish." Chapman's version is :

And such a *stormy* day shall come, in mind and soul I know,  
When sacred Troy *shall shed her towers, for tears of overthrow.*

Pope is another famous poet who has attempted the perilous task, but his literary style, better fitted for a sage's philosophising than to describe a soldier lighting his camp-fire, conveys no sense of the plain naturalness of Homer. Yet in great moments Pope is singularly successful ; he then has the rapidity, the nobleness, and often the simple, unromantic language which give a partial impression of the original. A good average example of Pope's prodigious talent is this rendering of a passage in Sarpedon's speech quoted a few days before he died by an English statesman who had played his part in arranging that Treaty of Paris which concluded the Seven Years' War. It was Lord Grenville, who at the time (1762) expressed in Homer's words the satisfaction he felt at helping to give his country peace.

Could all our care elude the gloomy grave  
Which claims no less the fearful than the brave,  
For lust of fame I shall not vainly dare  
In fighting fields, nor urge thy soul to war :  
But since, alas ! ignoble age must come,  
Disease, and death's inexorable doom ;  
The life which others pay, let us bestow,  
And give to fame what we to nature owe.

Pope is too "literary" to convey any sense of the plain thinking and plain diction of Homer, but his translation has great merits, and the modern tendency is to grant it a much higher place than that assigned by Matthew Arnold. William Cowper, that gentle and perplexed spirit, has neither the force nor the rapidity of Pope driving his heroic couplet as a Greek hero his chariot, and he is at his best in still life descriptions.

Lord Derby had not a tithe of Cowper's poetic gift, but his faithful version of the *Iliad*, an honest and untiring attempt, as he said, "to infuse into an almost literal English version something of the spirit, as well as the simplicity, of the great original," has come much closer to success than any other. An excellent example of this translation is the moving passage in which Andromache sees from the walls of Troy the desecration of her husband's corpse by the triumphant Achilles—a dreadful scene which impresses us all the more because it follows so soon after the account of the poor lady's arrangements to provide

Hector with a new embroidered robe and a hot bath on his safe return from battle :

Then from the house she rushed, like one distract,  
 With beating heart ; and with her went her maids.  
 But upon the tow'r she reach'd, where stood the crowd,  
 And mounted on the wall, and look'd around,  
 And saw the body trailing in the dust,  
 Which the fleet steeds were dragging to the ships,  
 And sudden darkness overspread her eyes ;  
 Backward she fell, and gasp'd her spirit away.  
 Far off were flung the adornments of her head,  
 The net, the fillet, and the woven bands ;  
 The nuptial veil by golden Venus given,  
 That day when Hector of the glancing helm  
 Led from Eëtion's house his wealthy bride.  
 The sisters of her husband round her press'd,  
 And held, as in the deadly swoon she lay.  
 But when her breath and spirit returned again,  
 With sudden burst of anguish thus she cried :  
 " Hector, oh woe is me ! to misery  
 We both were born alike ; thou here in Troy,  
 In Priam's royal palace ; I in Thebes,  
 By wooded Placos, in Eëtion's house,  
 Who nurs'd my infancy ; unhappy he,  
 Unhappier I ! Would I had ne'er been born ! "

Only a poet with Swinburne's mastery of blank verse could hope to make a nobler version of the *Iliad* than Lord Derby's, and to come nearer (yet still how far away !) to achieving the miracle of pouring the old wine of Homer's poetry into new metrical bottles.

A very interesting experiment in Homeric translations is the incomplete version of the *Odyssey* by William Morris, in which that entrancing poet displays his power of rapid and stirring narrative, his gift of creating a fresh, other-worldly atmosphere, and his sympathy with the saga spirit to great advantage. He shows us the Homeric scenes, it is true, through a misty glamour half-way between that of fairy-tales and that of the stark Northern epics. But, after all, the Homeric heroes were nearer to the Vikings in personality than any other adventurers of literature—they might almost be defined as types midway between the Northmen and the Normans, for the history revealed by picks rather than by pens clearly shows that they had entered into the material civilisation of others to possess it, and to enjoy a luxury and a lavishness which was in advance of their spiritual growth. The moment when the suitors of Penelope are visited by a sudden sense of impending doom, only



understood by Theoclymenus, is thus presented by the author of *The Earthly Paradise* :

So he spake ; but Pallas Athene amidst the wooers' crew  
Awoke undying laughter, and their minds astray she drew ;  
For now all they were laughing with the jaws of other men,  
And flesh bloodstained they were eating, and the eyes of them as then  
Were filled with tears, and the thoughts of their souls into sorrow strayed.  
Then the godlike Theoclymenus he spake to them and said :  
" Why bear ye this bale, ye unhappy ? For your heads and your faces outright,  
And the knees that are beneath you are wrapt about in night,  
And let loose is the voice of wailing, and wetted with tears are your cheeks,  
And blood the hall-walls staineth and the goodly panels streaks ;  
And the porch is full of man-shapes and fulfilled is the garth of the stead,  
As they went 'neath the dusk and the darkness, and the sun from the heavens is  
dead ;  
And lo ! how the mist of evil draws up and all about ! "

Certainly we get the same eerie impression of an omen, felt as a warning only by the righteous man, which is communicated in Homer's actual words. This Morrisian version is unequalled for the vigour and luminous quality of all its open-air passages. Some critics take exception to the occasional somewhat undignified and harsh renderings of stock epithets and are jarred when the man of many wiles is styled " the shifty." But it seems to have all the merits of Chapman's translation and to lack the latter's all-pervading fault—the teasing-out of the plain thought of the original and the elaboration of its plain diction into Elizabethan subtlety and ornateness.

Those who wish to get as clear an insight into the noble lucidity of Homeric poetry (which, none the less, is like a diamond in that it cannot be seen through) as is possible without a knowledge of Greek, cannot do better than procure Lord Derby's and William Morris's translations, of which inexpensive editions can be procured.

As for prose translations, they abound, and, though uncouth in proportion to their literal precision, will help the student to follow the Homeric narrative in exact detail. Butcher and Lang's translation of the *Odyssey* at times rises to prose-poetry. And the curiously matter-of-fact translation in prose (at times too prosaic) by Samuel Butler, the great ironist and author of *Erewhon*, is an excellent tonic against the conventional " translatoresque " which lends an air of unreality to the very real and easily realised life of the Homeric poems. Butler's attempted proof that the *Odyssey* was written by a woman, none other than the wise and beautiful Nausicaa, must have been begun as an essay in his peculiar irony, but he seems in the end to have persuaded himself of the truth of his fantastical theory.



## § 5

## HOMERIC SIMILES

The use of simile in the Homeric poems is a characteristic feature which has been imitated by all makers of the "artificial epic" from Virgil to Milton. The Homeric similes are not mere decorations, like the pictures in an illuminated missal. They are dramatic; that is, they arise out of the action and add impressiveness to what follows, by leading the thoughts of the reader up through some similar, but less familiar, picture to a keener realisation of the wonder or terror or pitifulness of a scene or an event. They are like the illustrations to a book the inner significance of which has been grasped by the illustrator, who yet allows his imagination to sport with the details of his picture. "Secure of the main likeness," comments Pope, "Homer makes no scruple to play with the circumstances." His similes thus afford a contrast to those in the Old Testament (for example, Job's comparison of the inconstancy of friends to the failure of water in the desert, when springs on which the caravans relied are found to be dry), for the Hebraic similes dispense with non-essential details. The *Iliad* contains about a hundred and eighty full-length similes, pictures complete in themselves, and the *Odyssey* only forty. This difference is inevitable, for the *Odyssey*, though full of marvel and marvellous adventures, has not nearly so many moments of tense excitement—dramatic "thrills," as it were—as the *Iliad* with its warlike action and movements of armed hosts in a restricted arena.

The range of Homeric simile extends from the lowliest to the loftiest matters. Like the Old Testament writers, Homer delights in a homely image; thus, like them, he finds similitudes in the work of the threshing floor and the winnowing fan. The Hebrew chronicler (in 2 Kings xxi. 13) writes: "I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down"; and Homer finds as homely a similitude, when he compares the obstinate Ajax, beset by enemies, to an ass which has got into a cornfield and is being cudgelled in vain by boys. Sometimes Homer uses a sequence of similes; as when, in a description of the Greeks leaving the quarters by the ships for the place of assembly, they are successively likened to fire devouring a forest (because of their gleaming armour), to a flight of clamouring birds (because of their noise and haste), to innumerable leaves (when they are mustered in a fluctuating mass), to buzzing flies (as an excited hum is heard from the assembly), and to flocks of goats parted by goat-herds (when they are marshalled in divisions by their leaders).



Again, in order to heighten the terror of warlike episodes by contrasting them with small, innocent affairs, he tells us that Apollo throws down the Greek rampart as easily as a child destroys its sand-castle on the sea-beach, or makes Achilles rebuke his comrade Patroclus for weeping like a little girl running by her mother's side and clinging to her dress, and looking up in tears until she is picked up and carried.

His more majestic images are suggested by fire—especially, conflagrations in a mountain forest—torrents, snowstorms, lightning, and winds battling together as so often occurs in the landlocked Ægean. A fine example of the majestic simile is found when Minerva invests Achilles with her ægis, thus encircling his head with a golden cloud from which a flame is made to shoot forth. The Rev. W. C. Green's translation of *The Similes of Homer's Iliad* contains the following fine version of this most striking simile :

As from an island city, seen afar,  
The smoke goes up to heaven, when foes besiege :  
And all day long in grievous battle strive  
The leaguered townsmen from this city wall :  
But soon, at set of sun, blaze after blaze,  
Are lit the beacon-fires, and high the glare  
Shoots up for all that dwell around to see,  
That they may come with ships to aid their stress :  
Such light blazed heavenward from Achilles' head.

The lion, by the way, provides no fewer than thirty comparisons in the *Iliad*, the most notable of which likens Ajax, defending the body of Patroclus, to a lion guarding his cubs, glaring in his might and drawing down his brows. These similes are often jewels of history. The image of the beleaguered island-city, kindling its fiery SOS. to bring help from its neighbours, reminds us that it was an age when such raids were common, as waves of armed emigrants came down overland from Central Europe, and, having built or seized ships, sought to acquire footholds in the southern seas by piratical attacks. And the frequency of leonine similes tells us by implication that the lion was a familiar beast on the mainland—a fact confirmed by Herodotus and Xenophon, who state that he was still met with in Macedonia, Thessaly, and Thrace in the fifth century B.C. Homer indeed gives us history as well as a story, and we are now in a position, thanks to the wonderful results of excavation since Schliemann's epoch-making discoveries, to detach the historical from the legendary and imaginative matter, and to make a picture, correct in its main outlines, of the real Homeric world. Homer, the book, is not an artistic myth ; it is the record, howsoever distorted and overlaid and "restored," of a life that was actually lived by men more like than unlike ourselves.



## § 6

## THE HOMERIC WORLD

Something must be said as to the great controversy started by Wolf's *Prolegomena* (published at Halle in 1795) as to the way in which the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* came into being and attained their present form. Wolf's theory was an expression of the all-questioning spirit that, in the domain of politics, broke out with explosive force in the French Revolution, and, in the sphere of historical criticism, prompted Ihne and Niebuhr to show the legendary nature of the early annals of Rome. It attempted to prove four main points. The author contended that (1) the Homeric poems were composed without the aid of writing, which is not mentioned in them and, in 950 B.C., was either unknown to the Greeks or not yet used in the making of literary records, and that the poems out of which the two epics were made up, were passed on by oral recitation, during which process they were much altered; (2) when written down, about 550 B.C., "revisers" and literary critics went on polishing the poems and altering them to suit their tastes in art; (3) the artistic unity of both epics is the result of this artificial treatment in later ages; (4) the original layouts of which the epics are built up were the work of several authors, though it would never be possible to show where the component parts begin and end.

There is nothing dogmatic in Wolf's famous book (which is written in Latin), and he did not deny the existence of a personal Homer, a poet of genius who "began the weaving of the web." Moreover, he admits that the argument convinced his head but not his heart, so to speak. Turning from his theory to read the poems once more as poetry, plunging into the clear rushing stream of the story yet again, the harmonious consistency of it all renews the old irresistible impression of a personal unity, and he is angry with the reasoned scepticism which has destroyed his belief in a single master-poet. Into the controversial maze created by his book it is impossible to enter here. The ancient conception of authorship must be abandoned; it is comparable with the faith of simple folk who believe that the Bible in its present form was handed down out of Heaven. The very name "Homer," which means "piecer-together," is sufficient proof that the belief in a single authorship, one and indivisible, cannot be maintained. And every part of the poems bears the marks of revision; for example, it is abundantly clear that barbaric episodes have been toned down to suit the taste of later and gentler ages when the Greek horror of "the disgusting" had so prevailed as to insist that murders should take place off the stage.



In the long and still unsettled controversy as to the origin and authorship, the poets—and the professional scholars in whom something of a poet survives—have always leant to the side of personal unity. In England the impression has always prevailed, and is perhaps gathering force to-day, that less importance is to be attached to the discrepancies with which the scholar-critic is chiefly concerned than to the sympathetic insight of men of poetic genius such as Schiller, who called Wolf's theory "barbaric," and Goethe, who, though at first inclined to accept it, on second thoughts said in a letter to Schiller: "I am more than ever convinced of the unity and indivisibility of the poem (the *Iliad*)."

The opinion of Matthew Arnold, a ripe scholar as well as a poet full of the Greek spirit, is weighty indeed: "The insurmountable obstacle to believing the *Iliad* a consolidated work of several poets is this—that the work of great masters is unique; and the *Iliad* has a great master's genuine stamp, and that stamp is *the grand style*."

### READING LIST

The beginner studying Homer will do well to read such books as Sir R. C. Jebb's *Homer: an Introduction to the Iliad and Odyssey* (R. Maclehose & Sons, Glasgow) and the excellent volumes on the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* by the Rev. W. Lucas Collins in Messrs. W. Blackwood & Sons' series, *Ancient Classics for English Readers*.

Other books are:

Dr. Walter Leaf's *A Companion to the Iliad for English Readers; Homer and History; and Troy, a Study in Homeric Geography* (all published by Macmillan).

Andrew Lang's *Homer and his Age; Homer and the Epic; and The World of Homer* (all Longmans).

Matthew Arnold's essay *On Translating Homer* (various editions, Routledge and John Murray).

Other books on Homer are J. A. K. Thomson's *Studies in the Odyssey* (Oxford University Press); F. M. Stawell's *Homer and the Iliad: an Essay to Determine the Scope and Character of the Original Poem* (J. M. Dent & Sons).

Mention must also be made of the two books by Samuel Butler (the author of *Erewhon*), *The Authoress of the Odyssey*, in which Butler expresses the view that the *Odyssey* was written by a woman, and *The Humour of Homer* (both published by Jonathan Cape); and of H. A. Guerber's *The Book of the Epic* (Harrap).

Messrs. Macmillan publish the following important modern translations of Homer :

*The Iliad done into English Prose*, by Andrew Lang, Walter Leaf, and Ernest Myers.

*The Odyssey done into English Prose*, by S. H. Butcher and Andrew Lang.

*The Iliad in English Verse*, by A. S. Way (2 vols.).

*The Odyssey in English Verse*, by A. S. Way.

Other modern translations are : *The Odyssey translated into English Verse*, by J. W. Mackail (John Murray, 3 vols.) ; *The Odyssey translated into English in the Original Metre*, by Francis Caulfeild (George Bell & Sons) ; *The Odyssey, a line for line translation, in the Metre of the Original*, by H. B. Cotterill (Harrap). William Morris, the famous author of *The Earthly Paradise*, translated the *Odyssey* into English verse (Longmans), while Samuel Butler, author of *Erewhon* and *The Way of All Flesh*, did a prose version of the *Odyssey* (Jonathan Cape), as also did T. E. Lawrence (Oxford University Press).

A recent interesting experiment is *Homer, the Odyssey*, published in the form of a novel in modern English (Penguin Classics). It is by E. V. Rieu.

Another Penguin which gives the background is *The Ancient World*, by T. R. Glover.

There are, of course, many older translations. Alexander Pope's versions of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are both published in Bohn's Library (George Bell). The renderings of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by George Chapman, the Elizabethan poet and dramatist, can be obtained in Messrs. Dent's Temple Classics. William Cowper, the poet, made an English blank verse translation of the *Iliad*, of which there is, apparently, no modern edition. The American poet, William Cullen Bryant, did a blank verse version of the *Iliad* (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston). Sir John F. W. Herschel's version of the *Iliad* in English hexameters was published by Macmillan.

The version of the *Iliad* in English blank verse by Edward, Earl of Derby, is in Messrs. Routledge's New Universal Library.

An extremely useful *Companion to Classical Literature*, from Homer onwards, is published by the Oxford University Press ; the editor is Sir Paul Harvey.

A Classical Dictionary is an essential reference book not only for the reader of Homer but for the general reader. That edited by E. H. Blakeney and published in the Everyman Library (Dent) is excellent.



### III

## THE STORY OF THE BIBLE

THE collection of ancient books which we call the Bible is of incomparable value and importance. It has done more for the moral and religious progress of mankind than any other literature. As a record of the most significant process in human civilisation, of clear thought and right feeling developing together for a thousand years, it is unique. Some books in it reach levels of artistic excellence which have never been surpassed. And, moreover, the translation into English which we know as the Authorised Version is the foremost classic in our language.

If we inquire why the Bible can be regarded as a single surpassingly great book, the answer must be that there is in it unity, no less than sincerity, beauty, and strength. It has really but one theme—man's search for God. Behind history and poetry, prophecy and drama, gospel and epistle, there lies an intense eagerness to understand God's ways, to realise His nature, to feel His presence. Yet, fortunately, the Bible is not a collection of theological treatises. It is as varied as the life of man, a mirror of human endurance and weakness, triumph and failure. Above all it is a living history of spiritual progress. For this reason, from end to end of the Bible, there are books and passages of supreme excellence. They were written by men passionately in earnest, inspired by a pure and lofty faith, and convinced that they bore a great message for mankind. Consequently the language of these men is clear and simple, their thought direct and vigorous. Like all great artists they are economical, sparing in their use of words. Their work has a quality which "finds" us, a something which we term inspiration. Coleridge, who loved the Bible and was more than ordinarily sensitive to its appeal, said of it: "In every generation and wherever the light of revelation has shone, men of all ranks, conditions, and states of mind have found in the Bible a correspondent for every movement towards the better felt in their own hearts."

We must always remember that the Bible is not one book: it is many. In the Old Testament there is the best literature produced by the Hebrew race during well-nigh a thousand years. The New Testament, on the other hand, contains the literature, not of a nation, but of a movement. It is a collection of Greek works, written within less than a century, which describe the life of Jesus of Nazareth and the early development of the Christian faith. But the connection between the Old and New Testaments

is intimate. Each is a product of Hebrew religious genius. Of the writers in the New Testament, all seem to have been Jews, save possibly St. Luke, and his racial origin is doubtful. Moreover, to the historian, Christ is in the direct line of the great Hebrew prophets. St. Paul, though he became the apostle to the Gentiles, thought as a Jew and not as a Greek. St. John used Greek ideas, but he was a spiritual descendant of Ezekiel. Christianity, in fact, was a natural outgrowth of Judaism.

To the student of history and of religious thought, the New Testament is the most important part of the Bible ; yet, as literature, it is on the whole inferior to the earlier writings. By the time of Christ, the Greek language, as spoken by the Jews of the Levant, had lost its purity. Not even the sincerity and enthusiasm of the New Testament writers could make it a perfect medium for literary art. Moreover, between words and thought a natural harmony exists only if the ideas which a people develop are expressed in their own tongue. When Jewish religious understanding was poured into a Greek mould, such harmony was marred. Throughout the New Testament there are passages which are astonishingly fine ; but, speaking generally, we miss the sustained excellence of many Old Testament books. Wordsworth said truly that " the grand storehouses of enthusiastic and meditative imagination . . . are the prophetic and lyrical parts of the Holy Scriptures." Because we describe such storehouses and show how they were built and filled, we shall of necessity give to the New Testament less consideration than its intrinsic importance merits. It would be foreign to our present purpose to discuss the Christian faith. We seek to show why the Bible is a classic of literature, permanently enjoyable and permanently helpful ; why a distinguished agnostic like T. E. Huxley would call it " the Magna Charta of the poor and the oppressed."

## § I

## THE ISRAELITES

Who were the people who made the Old Testament, and whence came their religious genius ? The beginning of Egyptian history, so far as our present knowledge goes, can be placed about 5000 B.C. Two thousand years later there were in Babylonia and Egypt two empires, already highly civilised, well organised, and powerful. For some time a race called the Sumerians held the country of the Euphrates. They ceased to be dominant and their place was taken by Semites. To the Semitic stock the nomad tribes of desert Arabia belonged. Possibly there was some Semitic blood also among the people of Egypt ; but the differences which separate



Babylonian and Egyptian art, letters, and thought point to fundamental differences of racial origin. Between the empires of the Euphrates and the Nile there lay the Arabian Desert and a small stretch of fertile country near the Mediterranean, anciently called Canaan, which we now know as Palestine. The Canaanites, who inhabited the land, were also Semites; and at a remote date Babylonian influence over Canaan was dominant. Then there came a time when Egypt expanded her borders and conquered Canaan. Some famous letters discovered in 1887 at Tell-el-Amarna belong approximately to the period 1400-1370 B.C.<sup>1</sup> From them we learn that Canaan at that time had been an elaborately organised province, paying taxes to Egypt; but that all was falling into disorder because Egypt's power was waning. About the year 1230 B.C. "certain clans of a nomad race known as Hebrews, on whom some of the Pharaohs had imposed forced labour, broke away from Egypt under the leadership of Moses, and returned to their nomadic life in the oases of the desert south of Palestine." These clans, whom we also know as the Children of Israel, were Semites, closely akin in language and customs to the Canaanites and to many tribes of the Arabian Desert. They were probably but small; it may even be that the men in them did not number more than a few thousands.<sup>2</sup> They lived for a generation in the wilderness and then set out to conquer the fertile country of Canaan. Their task was made possible by the fact that Egyptian rule over Canaan was at an end. But, though they established themselves firmly in the hilly country, the Canaanites continued to hold the plains. A long period of war and disorder only ceased when, under the Israelite king David, Canaanites and Israelites were fused into one people. After the year 1000 B.C. Hebrew culture, and especially Hebrew religion, were nominally dominant.

About the same time that the Hebrews entered Canaan, the Philistines seem to have conquered the maritime plain near Gaza. These Philistines were not Semites but Aryan seafarers. Probably they came from the coast of Asia Minor near Crete, that centre of an early and wonderful civilisation revealed by the discoveries of Sir Arthur Evans. Old Testament history

<sup>1</sup> These letters, for the most part, are in the Assyrian language, and written in cuneiform characters. They were addressed to the Egyptian kings Amen-Hotep III and IV; and were found in the tomb of a secretary to those monarchs. The tomb is near the Nile, about 180 miles south of Memphis.

<sup>2</sup> It is always necessary to be cautious in accepting numbers given in ancient documents. Errors, due to carelessness of copyists and other causes, are very likely to arise. Professor Flinders Petrie has examined the census lists of the Israelite tribes given in the Book of Numbers, chapters i. and xxvi. He makes the ingenious suggestion that *alaf* has two meanings, a "thousand" and "a group"; and therefore, when we have the figure 32,200, it originally meant 32 tents containing 200 people. He thus reaches the conclusion that the numbers of Israelites in the two lists are respectively 5500 and 5730.



shows plainly that David used the Philistines in establishing his kingdom ; and archæologists hold that through Philistine influence " a remnant of the dying glories of Crete " contributed to the progress of Hebrew culture.

Whence did the Hebrews get their religion, and what was its original character ? The questions are difficult to answer. Renan asserted that the Semite of the desert, " living where nature is so uniform, must be a monotheist." But there is no evidence for this theory ; and all other Semites, when they reached countries like Syria and the Euphrates valley where nature is luxuriant, quickly developed an elaborate and sometimes gross polytheism. We must accept the Biblical tradition that in the wilderness, from Moses, the Hebrews received the germ of that moral monotheism which has been of incalculable value to mankind. Moses must have been supremely great, a natural leader of men and a religious genius. His mind must have been creative, his character austere, his religious insight profound. As the Hebrew prophets, from Elijah in the ninth century onwards, developed Hebrew monotheism, they believed themselves to be the true heirs of the Mosaic tradition. Their strength lay in their conviction that they were fighting to preserve the best elements of Israelite culture from contamination by ideas and practices of Canaanite origin.

It cannot be held that Moses had derived his religion from Egypt. The Egyptians practised circumcision ; but Moses, and those of his followers who were born in the wilderness, were uncircumcised. Further, the prophets believed that they were true to the teaching of Moses in proclaiming that Jehovah was God of the whole earth ; and most certainly there is no echo in the Ten Commandments of the many gods of Egyptian polytheism. Nowhere does the difference between Egyptian and Israelite religion appear more markedly than in connection with the doctrine of a future life. Neither in the teaching of Moses, nor in that of any great Hebrew prophet before the year 600 B.C., is there mention of a life after death or of judgment to come ; but Egyptian religion is dominated by such beliefs. In fact, the originality of Moses, the independence of his religious insight, his direct inspiration, appear unchallengeable. When the Jews in later ages appealed to the authority of Moses, they rightly claimed that Moses was the source of the faith that made the Jewish nation.

Professor Kennett believes that monogamy was an element in the ethical system of Moses. " There is not a hint in any of the prophets to suggest that they approved of polygamy, and there are several passages that imply monogamy. Here, again, it is probable that the prophets' ideas about marriage belong to the general tradition of the teaching of Moses."

The earlier books of the Bible result from so many combinations and



alterations at different times that it is hard to form a definite opinion as to this and many other questions. For instance, we find it difficult to show conclusively that Moses was a monotheist. The first commandment, "I am the Lord thy God ; thou shalt have none other gods but me," proves that the Hebrews were to worship Jehovah and Him alone. But was He merely the God of the Hebrews, just as other nations had their tribal gods ; or was He the one and only God of the whole earth ? Probably Moses, like the great prophets in subsequent centuries, held the latter view ; but popular opinion, after the fusion of the Israelite and Canaanite races, thought it natural that different peoples should have different gods. So, apparently without offending public opinion, Solomon built "an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the mount that is before Jerusalem," together with other altars to heathen deities. Alike in this action and in his polygamy we see popular Canaanite custom struggling successfully against the higher Israelite ideal. So far from being surprised at this uprising we remain amazed that it was not permanently successful. The census statistics of David and Rehoboam indicate that the population of the early monarchy was 1,300,000. A few thousand Israelites of the Exodus could not possibly have increased to such a number in a couple of centuries. The people over whom David ruled must have been largely of non-Israelite origin ; and the Bible records tell us explicitly that in his army foreigners were numerous. In fact, "the numbers of Israel were enlarged by accretion." May we not deem it "providential" that Hebrew religion in Palestine did not suffer the same sort of corruption as the religion which the Aryan invaders brought into ancient India ?

To understand the Hebrew prophets and their fierce indignation against Canaanite worship we must bear in mind that with such worship was associated the religious immorality which disgraces Southern Indian temples at the present day. They were fired by a moral indignation against cruelty and lust. The Canaanites and Phœnicians spoke practically the same language as the Hebrews : all were Semites. "Hannibal is just 'the grace of Baal.' Put Jah (Jehovah) for Baal, and you have the Hebrew Hananiah ; or, reverse the word, and you have Johanan, the Greek Ioannes and our John." But Phœnicians and Carthaginians had no ethical or religious message for mankind. The practice of human sacrifice was in earlier times not unknown among either them or the Canaanites ; and in their temples obscene idols and religious prostitution went together. Had Carthage conquered Rome it would have been a curse to human civilisation. That Christianity conquered the Roman Empire was a blessing to mankind. The difference between the blessing and the curse measures the importance of the work of the Hebrew prophets. The Old Testament, read aright, is the story of their work and its outcome.



## § 2

## THE BEGINNING OF THE BIBLE : THE LAW

To read the Old Testament aright we must know when, and by whom, its books were written. The first part of the Old Testament to be regarded as peculiarly sacred and inspired was "The Law," the first five books of the Bible. These books, as we all know, are *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*. In our Bibles they are, in their titles, ascribed to Moses. We begin with "the first book of Moses called *Genesis*." The Jews, in the time of Christ, also ascribed these books to Moses ; but they did not then bear our modern titles. *Genesis* was denoted merely by its first words, "In the beginning." Until a century ago the belief lasted that Moses wrote practically the whole Pentateuch. There is now an almost complete agreement among scholars that it took its present form after the Exile of the Jews and before the return of Ezra, that is to say, between the years 600 B.C. and 450 B.C. The Law was probably promulgated by Ezra soon after he came to Jerusalem from Babylon, and was speedily deemed authoritative and sacred. Moreover, modern scholars are convinced that, in the Pentateuch, there is little that goes back to the time of Moses. It is, in its present form, the result of a series of religious reformations ; and the whole framework was constructed by a school of priestly writers in Babylonia during the Exile.

These views differ so widely from those which were formerly accepted that many who have not weighed the evidence regard them as fanciful. The whole of the evidence can only be marshalled in an elaborate treatise ; but a single important illustration may show its strength. Under the final system described in the Book of *Leviticus* all religious worship was concentrated at Jerusalem. There were no local altars or shrines where sacrifices could be offered to God. "If Moses had left such a system as a public code specially entrusted to the priests and leaders of the nation, that code must have influenced at least the *élite* of Israel." But the prophets before the Captivity know nothing of it. Even when Solomon built the Temple at Jerusalem, he did not conform to the law of *Leviticus*. The two brazen pillars which stood at the porch would have been forbidden by that law, for they were pagan emblems common in Canaanite and Phœnician religion. For centuries also the keepers of the sanctuary were uncircumcised foreigners and not "sons of Levi," as the law ordained. There is, in short, overwhelming proof that before the Exile the law of *Leviticus* was not merely disregarded : it was unknown.

When such a result has been reached, the way is open for a right under-



standing of the Pentateuch. This understanding has been reached by an elaborate study of the literary styles of the various writers and groups of writers whose work survives ; by paying attention to the use of critical words, such as those for " God " ; by investigating the development of religious ritual and thought ; and by minute antiquarian research. A language changes as the centuries go by : we cannot write like Swift or Addison, nor could they write like Shakespeare, nor Shakespeare like Chaucer. Of course, there is always some uncertainty in literary analysis ; but the main outlines of the following sketch may be accepted with a large measure of confidence.

Probably that part of the Old Testament which has the closest connection with Moses is the *Book of the Covenant*, preserved in *Exodus*, chapters xx.-xxiii. It contains, besides the Ten Commandments, " a few simple rules for worship, allowing freedom to meet God at many altars and giving no direction as to who shall perform the priestly service." There are also simple civil laws, in which justice and kindness are happily combined.

A large part of the more interesting material in the Book of Genesis is due to two writers, whom scholars call J and E. These symbols stand for " Judæan " and " Ephraimite " respectively, and mean that they belonged to south and north Israel. J probably flourished about the middle of the ninth century B.C., and E somewhat less than a century later. " Of all Hebrew historians J is the most gifted and the most brilliant. He excels in the power of delineating life and character. In ease and grace his narratives are unsurpassed. He writes without effort, and without conscious art." To him we owe the story of Eden and the Fall, of Abraham's pleading for Sodom, of the wooing of Rebekah. E does not write so brilliantly as J. He has not the same felicity of expression or poetic vigour. To him is due the history of Joseph in Egypt. But the story of the selling of Joseph with its many inconsistencies is the result of a somewhat artless combination of narratives of J and E, which differed in that each assigned the blame of the transaction to ancestors of the other. The story of the Flood is similarly full of inconsistencies. Its present form results from combining a story of J with material due to a group of writers whom scholars call P. These men supplied the whole framework of the Pentateuch, and gave it its final form. They were priests, living in Babylonia during the Exile ; conscientious, prosaic annalists. They describe with relish the different ceremonial institutions of the Hebrews. They take a consistent pleasure in chronological and other statistical data. Whenever we come across a passage beginning " These are the generations of . . . ", we may safely assume that it is the handiwork of P.

One of the priestly writers was the author of the opening chapter of the Bible, where his style is unmistakable. There is a second and not wholly



consistent account of Creation given in Genesis, chapter ii. (vv. 4-7). This is due to J, and so is some three centuries older than P's narrative. The first Creation story probably reflects the influence of Babylonian scientific speculation. Though the progressive development of modern science has rendered it obsolete, it is worthy of our respect, and its noble monotheistic setting is of enduring value.

In thus describing the work of P, we have passed over an earlier writer to whom the most valuable part of the Pentateuch is due. This is D, the author of the great sermon ascribed to Moses which makes the book Deuteronomy. J and E may be regarded as forerunners of the first succession of prophets, Amos, Hosea, and Micah. D is, in language and thought, closely allied to Jeremiah; and he must have lived about the year 650 B.C. His work was almost certainly the book discovered "in the house of God by Hilkiah in the year 621 B.C.," which served as a basis for the reformation of Jewish religion under King Josiah. Written very likely when the heathen reaction under King Manasseh seemed finally to have destroyed the fine religious tradition which went back to Moses, *Deuteronomy* shows rich and true spiritual insight. Ritual, indeed, has developed since the Book of the Covenant; but formalism has not quenched the fire of the spirit. We must not assume that D, in writing his book, created legislation unheard of before. He probably gathered together what he regarded as the best developments of the past, combined them with exhortations due to his own religious fervour, and then passed away leaving his book as a legacy to a happier time. Christians will never forget that from it comes the first half of the Golden Rule. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Alongside the Book of Deuteronomy we may put an ancient document embedded in the Book of Leviticus, chapters xvii.-xxvi. This is called by scholars the Law of Holiness. It has been altered by the priestly editors of the Pentateuch, but there are many indications which point to the influence of the prophet Ezekiel. It resembles the Book of the Covenant in that the laws in it are in the main addressed to the people, not to the priest. Its religious inspiration is magnificent. In it we find the second half of the Golden Rule, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Throughout the ages mystics have felt the appeal of its words, "And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people"; and the mission of Israel to humanity was never more finely expressed than in the sentence, "And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples that ye should be mine."

For the convenience of readers we give a short table to show the main sources from which the Pentateuch was constructed.



Book of the Covenant	Simple civil and religious laws of great antiquity.	Origin probably with Moses about 1200 B.C.
J . . . .	An historian of the Southern Kingdom of Judah.	About 850 B.C.
E . . . .	An historian of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.	About 780 B.C.
D . . . .	The writer who inspired the reformation under King Josiah and to whom the Book of Deuteronomy is due.	About 650 B.C.
Law of Holiness .	A code of ritual and civil law of great religious value, probably compiled by a friend or follower of Ezekiel.	About 570 B.C.
P . . . .	The school of writers in Babylonia who finally gave the Pentateuch its present form.	Between 550 and 450 B.C.

## § 3

## THE GROWTH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Hebrew Bible began with "The Law." To understand its further growth we must recognise that the order of the Old Testament books in our Bibles is not that which a strict Jew in the time of Christ would have deemed satisfactory. We shall later mention some of the great translations of the Hebrew scriptures into foreign languages. It is sufficient now to say that the standard Jewish translation into Greek is called the Septaugint; and the standard Christian translation into Latin, the Vulgate. Roughly speaking, the order of the books of the Old Testament in English Bibles is that of the Vulgate. This order in turn was derived from the Septaugint, the authors of which apparently tried to group the books according to their subject-matter. They thus obscured a distinction between two groups

of books which in the time of Christ was of real importance. They mixed up the group known as "*The Prophets*" with the group called "*The Writings*."

"*The Prophets*" was the Jewish description of the following group of books :

Joshua	Jeremiah
Judges	Ezekiel
Samuel 1 and 2	Isaiah
Kings 1 and 2	Twelve Minor Prophets

It thus contained, according to Jewish reckoning, eight books. We have to remember that these "books" were written on rolls of parchment or papyrus ; eight such rolls of fairly convenient size made up "*The Prophets*," just as five rolls made up "*The Law*."

"*The Writings*" was the description of the group formed by the remaining books in the English Old Testament, namely :

Ruth	Lamentations
Psalms	Daniel
Job	Esther
Proverbs	Ezra and Nehemiah
Ecclesiastes	Chronicles 1 and 2
Song of Solomon	

This group thus contained eleven "books" ; and the total number of books of the Hebrew Bible was thus twenty-four.

It seems at first sight mere pedantry to spend time in separating "*The Prophets*" from "*The Writings*." But in the time of Christ "*The Writings*" had not won the same sort of recognition as was given to the Law and the Prophets. *They could not be read as Scripture at the Synagogue services.* They were on trial, as it were, slowly establishing a claim to be regarded as equally sacred and inspired. When Christ said, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets," He implied that the one command summed up the whole of Bible teaching. For such teaching it was not necessary to go to "*The Writings*."

#### § 4

#### THE PROPHETS

Eight, or according to our reckoning twenty-one, books made up the group called "*The Prophets*." When were they first regarded as Scripture ?



The process was, no doubt, gradual. Pious Jews, who venerated the Law, found in the Prophets spiritual inspiration which deepened the religious meaning of the Temple ritual which the Law had established. The Law was primarily ecclesiastical; but religious men are seldom satisfied solely by an ecclesiastical system. They demand the witness of history to God, records of personal faith and the fire of prophetic enthusiasm. Whenever religion is earnest, the Prophet takes his place by the side of the Priest. So, gradually but irresistibly, "the Prophets" supplemented "the Law." Probably during the third century B.C. a lesson from the one group of books was added to a lesson from the other in the synagogue services, just as in Christian churches a lesson from the New Testament follows a lesson from the Old. By 250 B.C. the Prophets seem to have become Scripture. Henceforth the history and preaching of the men who had kept inviolate all that was best in the faith of Moses, who during centuries of struggle had developed the finest monotheism the world has known—such history and preaching were sacred.

There is confusion in the varied literature which makes up "The Prophets." The books of *Joshua*, *Judges*, *Samuel*, and *Kings* narrate the history of the Israelites from the Exodus to the Exile, and the earlier part of this history is of doubtful value. The fact is not surprising. During the Exile valuable documents were lost. Rolls wore out. Fragments of history and prophecy of different ages were gathered together into new rolls. The process of combination, of revision, and of more or less drastic "editing," which produced the Pentateuch, also affected the historical and prophetic books. We naturally regret that so much of the earlier history of Israel which is presented in the Bible is "ideal" history, written from the standpoint of a much later age. Yet what has been lost is relatively unimportant, because fortunately the story of the bitter struggle and ultimate triumph of the Prophets is, in its main outlines, clear.

The mists of the dawn of Hebrew history almost entirely shut out Moses from our sight. These mists are still thick three hundred years later, when Elijah appears upon the scene. At that time, early in the ninth century B.C., the struggle between Canaanite superstition and Israelite religion was at its fiercest. The Baal worship of the Canaanites was supported by the prestige of Phœnician power; but Elijah won the victory. He established the principles that Jehovah alone was God in Israel, that Jehovah was righteous and demanded righteousness from His people. The narratives of Elijah and Elisha have been incorporated in the Book of *Kings* from a very early source. They are of Northern Israelitish origin, "and exhibit the ease, grace, and vividness which belong to the best style of Hebrew historical literature." But they are dramatic history of the



type which preserves the spirit of a great adventure ; and not till we come to Amos do we get teaching authenticated by the very words of the prophet himself.

In the year 760 B.C. when Amos flourished, the centre of Hebrew national life was not in the petty state of Judah but in the powerful Northern Kingdom. To Amos, as to many another, it was plain that this kingdom, together with all the surrounding nations, was in danger of being overwhelmed by Assyria. As he mused over the situation he saw that, if Jehovah was Creator, then every movement of history was Jehovah's work. The Assyrian would be the instrument of divine punishment on all who broke the laws of universal morality. And especially, since Israel had known Jehovah, she must seek Him if she was to live. Yet her service must not be through ritual and sacrifice. "I hate, I despise your feast days : I take no pleasure in your solemn assemblies." "Let justice flow like waters and righteousness as an unfailing stream." The Prophet's message is as fresh, as much needed, now as when it was written. A religion of priests and prosperous people who condone injustice, sensuality, and harshness to the poor is worthless. They who find comfort in it "shall go into captivity with the first that go captive." Jehovah will judge according to righteousness, and especially strict will be His judgment of His own people.

The virgin of Israel is fallen, she cannot rise again.

She is cast down upon her land, there is none to raise her up.

Before the downfall thus predicted had come to pass, Hosea appeared. He was the last Prophet of the Northern Kingdom, tragically isolated in a corrupt society whose ruin he foresaw. His temperament was that of a poet. He was sensitive, with a passionate religious earnestness. He insists that Jehovah loves His people with the undying love that a husband can retain for a faithless wife. God must punish, but punishment will not be the end. Love, though outraged, is always eager to forgive. Indifferent to the prophet's message, the nobles of Samaria went to their doom. In 722 B.C. the Northern Kingdom perished. Thenceforth in the small kingdom of Judah, little more than the fortress city of Jerusalem with its dependent countryside, the spirit of Hebrew monotheism was preserved.

First Micah, "the prophet of the poor," came forward to denounce the injustice of men in power, sternly to protest against abuses condoned by a corrupt priesthood and false prophets. Because of such evils "Zion shall be ploughed as a field and the temple-mountain shall be as the high places of the forest." And then Isaiah appears on the scene. The "call," which he describes with such restrained power in chapter vi. of the *Book of Isaiah*, probably took place in the year 740 B.C., while Hosea and Micah were still



active. Afterwards for forty years he sought to guide his countrymen. He was alike a prophet and a statesman, idealist, reformer, and shrewd judge of political issues. The range and quality of his influence may be measured by the extent of the literature gathered under his name. Of the Book of Isaiah the last twenty-seven chapters are a compilation of which the earliest portions are a century and a half later than the time of the Prophet. Even in the first thirty-nine chapters there is much material not due to him. But Isaiah began a great movement which profoundly affected the national life of Judah. We may compare with it the Evangelical movement of Wesley and his friends in England in the eighteenth century. Just as their preaching gave to the English people spiritual tenacity which carried the country safely through the Napoleonic Wars, so the religious confidence which Isaiah created lasted until the Jews returned from the Exile. Upon the basis of Isaiah's evangelicalism developments of institutional religion were reared. But just as there would have been no Oxford Movement had the Evangelical Revival never taken place, so the Deuteronomic reform and the later Levitical Code were possible because Isaiah had taught men to hear the Divine voice asking, "Whom shall We send?" and to give the answer, "Here am I, send me."

After Isaiah had passed away there came a heathen reaction under Manasseh, who ruled as a vassal of Assyria for half a century until the year 641 B.C. Fifteen years after his death Jeremiah received his call. His priestly ancestry, no doubt, made him more sympathetic than the earlier prophets to popular sacrificial worship. Perhaps, too, he saw that it was necessary to accept and reform such worship if the prophetic tradition was to survive. At any rate he associated himself with the Deuteronomic reform, wherein priest and prophet made an alliance discreditable to neither. Yet plainly with that reform he was not wholly content. Quite explicitly he rejects the idea that ritual is of value in itself. He was a mystic, who all around him saw signs of God's presence and power. In his writings for the first time in the Old Testament "we find frequent, intimate prayer." He taught that such communion with God removed religion from the domain of national pride. Inevitably the fierce patriots of his troubled age denounced him as a traitor. In his writings Jeremiah offers us perhaps the finest example in the Old Testament of a character disciplined and strengthened by suffering. He and his people needed all the fortitude, all the consolations of religion, which such an understanding as he had won could give them. Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C. and Jeremiah was made prisoner. When last we hear of him, he was being taken against his will by Jewish fugitives to Egypt.

Some eleven years before the fall of Jerusalem Ezekiel had been carried away to Babylon: and there for a quarter of a century he dreamed and



planned and preached. The Deuteronomic reform had failed : Ezekiel laid the foundations of a more stringent ecclesiastical system. Jerusalem was in ruins : Ezekiel, confident that the exiles would return, planned the theocratic state which arose to justify his vision. He, more than any other single man, made the Law, the Levitical Code which gave and still gives such marvellous coherence to the Jewish people. The enduring quality of his work testifies to his greatness. He had great literary gifts : his description of the magnificence of Tyre is a splendid piece of writing. His rich imaginative power is shown repeatedly, especially in the vision of the glory of God with which the Book of Ezekiel opens and in the picture of the resurrection in "the valley of dry bones." He quite rightly emphasises the importance of personal religion and the value of what a modern clergyman would term pastoral care. But, while Jeremiah was a mystic seeking personal communion with God, Ezekiel teaches the supremacy of Divine law. While Amos and Hosea were puritans, Ezekiel is a ritualist. And his ritual was the old Canaanite custom of animal sacrifices, strange and abhorrent to us now. It is true that he spiritualises the meaning of such rites, by developing the theology of propitiation which was afterwards to have its place in Christian doctrine. But, great as was his conception of the ordered Church transforming the world, yet the voices of those who cry in the wilderness, and recklessly find the peace of God amid strife and ruin, have done more for humanity. Ezekiel must have had rare prophetic gifts or he would not have been so distinguished a priest. Perhaps he was the greatest priest in history.

Let us pass from him to another exile by the waters of Babylon who lived a generation later, the unknown writer whom scholars call the Second Isaiah. In the middle of the Book of Isaiah, at the fortieth chapter, we hear his voice for the first time, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." Thereafter there comes, with lyrical splendour unmatched in religious literature, a message of consolation for Israel. The beauty of the language tends to hide from us the almost painful intensity of the writer's thought. But in no Old Testament writer do we find a more august picture of the majesty of God. To the Second Isaiah God is both Creator and Ruler of the world. Nations and their kings are the instruments of His purpose. Yet He is also patient and loving, not only to Israel but to all the nations upon earth. And Israel shall be His servant, suffering that the world may be redeemed. Nowhere else in Hebrew literature is there any parallel to this profound understanding. The Second Isaiah discovered the secret of the redemptive power of innocent suffering : more than five centuries before Calvary he revealed the significance of the Cross. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was



wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Here are combined unrivalled religious insight and matchless beauty of language ; and of the writer we know nothing, save that he lived when Cyrus the Persian destroyed the Babylonian Empire.

In the Old Testament there are altogether twelve Minor Prophets. The work of the three earliest we have described. It is sufficient to say that in the rest we find a considerable amount of material later than the death of Alexander the Great (323 B.C.). But the *Book of Jonah* deserves special mention. It is not history but prophetic allegory. The writer, whom very uncertainly we may date about the year 300 B.C., took an old prophetic legend, and made it the vehicle of some of the finest ethical teaching in the Old Testament. The Second Isaiah had proclaimed that Israel was disciplined by suffering that she might spread to all humanity her knowledge of God. But later Judaism too often showed itself narrow and fiercely patriotic. Against national intolerance the Book of Jonah is a splendid and powerful protest. The Prophet, who typifies Israel, is sent by God to preach repentance even to Nineveh, the great capital of his country's enemies. He tries to escape this unpleasant duty, but in vain. When finally he obeys the Divine command, Nineveh repents and God forgives. Jonah, sullen and angry, upbraids God for His mercy. And God answers, "Should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand little children and also much cattle?" Both those who profess literal belief in the miracle of Jonah's whale and those who deride their credulity usually ignore the lesson of this beautiful allegory. Modern nations at war, like fanatical Jews of old, resent such teaching. But the Book of Jonah has well been called the Holy of Holies of the Old Testament.

## § 5

### THE WRITINGS

The third division of the Hebrew Old Testament consists, as we have seen, of eleven or, according to our reckoning, thirteen books. Though they may contain some early material they were for the most part written late in Jewish history, probably within the two centuries which ended with the year 140 B.C. At that date the Jews, under the Maccabean princes, had just regained their independence. We can imagine the thrill of exultation which then went through the people. They were once again a



free nation. They awoke to the fact that, outside the Law and the Prophets, they had a national literature, a valuable record of national tenacity during the era of subjection. There was an irresistible impulse to gather together the finest works in this literature, to make a collection of poetry, drama, philosophy, and late history which should supplement the earlier Scriptures. So "The Writings" were gradually collected and gradually regarded as inspired. Such scanty evidence as we possess points to the fact that about a century before the birth of Christ this process was virtually completed. But even in Christ's day Jewish teachers did not regard "The Writings" as on a level with the Law and the Prophets. In particular the sacred character of four books, *the Song of Songs*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Esther*, and *Chronicles*, was long disputed. But at a conference at Jamnia, about A.D. 100, Jewish rabbis appear to have reached agreement. Thenceforth, as scholars say, the canon of the Hebrew Old Testament was closed. The leaders of the Jewish Church ratified a popular verdict; but the strange arguments by which some justified their action may be taken to show the hesitation which they felt. From three of the four disputed books there is no quotation in the New Testament. To *Chronicles* alone is there a reference; and this reference shows that it was regarded, when Jesus taught, as the last of the books deemed inspired.

By far the greatest of all the works in "The Writings" is the *Book of Psalms*. Sometimes, indeed, it gives its name to the whole collection. It is a hymn-book, the finest hymn-book ever made. Some of the hymns in it are ancient; a few may even go back to the time of David. But most were written after the Exile and some probably belong to Maccabean times. The hymn-book was compiled for use at the Temple in Jerusalem. Naturally, however, it passed into use at the synagogue services and thus had a profound influence on the faith of the Jewish people in the time of Christ. Anyone who examines the teaching of Jesus, as it is recorded in *St. Mark*, the earliest of the Gospels, will notice how frequently He quotes the *Psalms*. Christians in all ages have shared His love of these glorious hymns. Some few are vindictive and so alien from His temper. A few others we may deem prosaic. But the large majority are extraordinarily beautiful, alike in thought and expression. They are pure poetry, whereas too many modern hymns merely deserve to be described as religious verse. Especially splendid are the Pilgrim Songs (Ps. cxx.—cxxxiv.) which were sung by Jews coming to the Great Feasts as they ascended Mount Zion. We do not get in the *Psalms*, and we should hardly expect to find, any advance on the religious teaching of the great prophets. There is, for example, in the Psalter no doctrine of Eternal Life. The idea that prosperity is the reward of righteousness is common. The theology of this great hymn-book is, in fact, conventional. But faith and hope abound. Religious



joy and spiritual confidence, trust in God and thankfulness for His mercies, find repeated expression in language which is a pure delight. No religious poetry that has yet been written can be ranked above these Jewish hymns.

Among "The Writings" there are two other poetical works. *Lamentations* consists of five dirges, highly artificial in structure. Possibly the second and fourth were written by some man who had actually seen the horrors of the capture of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., while the remainder are of later date. Even in the English version we seem to find studied elaboration rather than passion evoked by overwhelming tragedy; and few will contradict the verdict that the book is not supremely great either in its religious insight or as a work of art. The *Song of Songs*, as we have already seen, was classed as Scripture only after much hesitation. Its right to a place in the Bible was defended on the ground that Solomon was its author, and that, symbolically, it represented Jehovah's love for his people. Neither contention can be justified. Its language shows that, in its present form, it cannot be earlier than the third century B.C. It does not mention Jehovah; it is in no sense a religious work. Some believe it to be a disordered dramatic idyll; but more probably, it is a collection of unconnected love-lyrics such as were sung at Jewish wedding-feasts. Their beauty, their sensuous passion, is undeniable. We do not wonder that Goethe praised them highly. They are voluptuous without being coarse. There is in them, moreover, a sensitive delight in nature which is rare in Hebrew literature. It is good that the *Song of Songs* should be in the Bible if only to remind us that, to the men who made the Old Testament as to ourselves, human love and springtime were two of God's rich gifts.

From poetry we pass naturally to idyllic narrative and drama. Of each of these forms of art we have one example in "The Writings." The *Book of Ruth* is exquisite in its simplicity and grace: Goethe described it as the loveliest little idyll that tradition has handed down to us. The story moves forward easily and naturally; it is filled with the spirit of kindness. When it was written we cannot tell: some good scholars believe it to be a very early example of Hebrew literary art. Early or late, it deserves to be immortal. Contrast with the fierce nationalism of Esther the words of Ruth the Moabitess to the Israelite widow: "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." With such affection the daughter of Moab came to Bethlehem. Half the world now turns with like love to that Judæan village.

The *Book of Job* is a great drama, of which the theme is the problem of human suffering. It presents many conundrums to commentators, among whom there is much disagreement. But apparently an early popular story was used as a basis of the drama; and, after the first draft was completed,



large additions and alterations were made by other writers. Consequently it is unequal, alike in descriptive power and in cogency of thought. The book mirrors the perplexity of Jewish thinkers during the period of Greek domination. It belongs to what is called the wisdom-literature of the Jews. Roughly speaking, this literature is Jewish speculative philosophy : in it an attempt is made to understand God's nature by an intellectual inquiry into the problems of human life. In *Job* no satisfactory reason is given for the suffering of the righteous. When the Lord answers out of the whirlwind He merely bids Job consider the inexplicable majesty of His creative power, manifest everywhere. St. Paul was doubtless recalling this reverent agnosticism when he wrote, "How unsearchable are God's judgments, and His ways past finding out."

Though the agnosticism of the Book of Job is profoundly reverent, there are in the Old Testament two other wisdom-books where faith has plainly degenerated. In *Proverbs* a shrewd worldly morality is mixed with finer material ; in the greater part of *Ecclesiastes* sceptical pessimism is dominant. Neither book in its present form can be much earlier than the year 250 B.C. The *Book of Proverbs* undoubtedly is highly composite in character. It contains three main divisions, of which the finest and latest is to be found in the first nine chapters of the book. The climax of this "Praise of Wisdom" magnificently describes wisdom as with God from the beginning. "When He prepared the heavens I was there. When He appointed the foundations of the earth I was by Him."

We feel no surprise that *Ecclesiastes* was only admitted to the Old Testament after prolonged hesitation. Its triumph bears witness to the wide liberality of later Jewish thought. We can best understand its apparent inconsistencies if we think of it as a record of the free discussion of academic theologians. It is often terribly gloomy, but the last chapter is superb in its English dress. "Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was : and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it"—the pure music of such sentences is perfect.

There remain for our consideration four works—*Chronicles*, *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, *Daniel*, and *Esther*. *Chronicles*, *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* really form a single continuous narrative, and it is generally assumed that all were produced by the same compiler. He probably lived during the third century B.C. A comparison with the *Book of Kings* which he used as one of the main sources of his work, shows that as a historian he is untrustworthy. For this reason, probably, the *Book of Chronicles* with difficulty secured a place among "The Writings." *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* were accepted more readily as there was no book in the historical section of "The Prophets" which



dealt with the same period of history. Yet it is certain that, as historical records of the return from the Exile, these works, though interesting, are faulty. Speaking briefly, *Chronicles* is *Kings* rewritten by a strict Jewish churchman: it is history falsified that it may be made edifying. In the supposed interests of piety truth has been sacrificed. Other ages can offer worse examples of ecclesiastical historians who were convinced that truth could be usefully perverted for the greater glory of God.

The *Book of Daniel* was written within the period 165-163 B.C. to encourage the Jews during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. The success of the Maccabean revolt, to which it doubtless gave powerful aid, won for it widespread popularity. Though it is probably the latest book in the Old Testament it was speedily included among "The Writings"; and in the time of Christ it was as well known as is *Pilgrim's Progress* to ourselves. It is the only example in the Old Testament of what is called Apocalyptic literature. In the New Testament the *Book of Revelation* is a work of the same type; and a number of other similar works are known to scholars. In all of them we find veiled predictions, usually relating to the outcome of events in the writer's own time, combined with fantastic and sometimes magnificent imagery. Often these works, by a literary fiction which deceived nobody, were assigned to some worthy of the past—a Daniel, a Moses, an Enoch. The writers of them sought to give a religious interpretation of history and to express their faith in the ultimate triumph of righteousness. Only by a violent effort of the imagination can we understand them aright, for they belong to a form of art and to modes of thought which have passed away. The *Book of Daniel* is a great work, for its stories still inspire and its grandeur still attracts men, though too often they profoundly misconceive its character.

The *Book of Esther* is an elaborate and skilfully written story which appealed to Jewish national pride. It is useful to have it in the Old Testament if only to indicate the sort of narrative which was popular in the time of Christ. It is alien from His spirit; and all Christians will sympathise with the reluctance of the rabbis to class it among their sacred books.

## § 6

### THE APOCRYPHA

In some English Bibles, placed between the Old and New Testaments, there are fourteen books or fragments of books, which bear the title "Apocrypha." Roughly speaking, these books were accepted by Jews of Alexandria as part of the Bible, but rejected by Jews of Palestine. All



but three of them are regarded as "inspired" by the Roman Church. The Reformed Churches give them a less honourable place. In the Church of England passages from the Apocrypha are read "for example of life and instruction of manners"; they are not to be applied "to establish any doctrine."

Some of these books and fragments are not worthy of a place in the Bible. The stories of *Susanna* and of *Bel and the Dragon* are poor stuff. *Judith* is a horrible tale in which a woman treacherously uses her beauty to murder the general of an invading army. The *Second Book of Maccabees* is history decked with fantastic legends. The *First Book of Esdras* is of even less historical value than *Chronicles*, *Ezra*, and *Nehemiah*. The best-known passage in it is the story of the three guardsmen who disputed as to what was the strongest thing in the world. "The first wrote, Wine is the strongest. The second wrote, The King is the strongest. The third wrote, Women are the strongest; but, above all things, Truth beareth away the victory." At the end "all the people shouted and said, Great is Truth, and mighty above all things." The verdict has passed into popular speech in its Latin dress, *Magna est veritas et prævalet*. The *Book of Tobit* is a romance which in the later Middle Ages was very popular; but, though it contains some fine moral lessons, it has more than a faint flavour of the *Arabian Nights*.

Yet in the Apocrypha there are also works of real value. The *First Book of Maccabees* is first-rate history of the successful revolt of the Jews after their persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes. It was written about 100 B.C., when little more than half a century had passed since the events which it records. As we study this history we realise the anguish and determination which caused the Book of Daniel to be written; and we understand why that apocalypse continued to be widely and deservedly popular in the time of Christ.

The most important and most attractive work in the Apocrypha is that called *Ecclesiasticus*. Its proper title is *The Wisdom of Jesus-ben-Sirach*. It consists of shrewd reflections upon life, and gives a sort of religious philosophy of conduct of singular beauty and penetration. In some former Christian ages it was widely read and highly esteemed: its title, which is at least as early as the third century, shows that it was regarded as in an especial degree the Church Book. Its author Jesus (or Joshua), the son or grandson of Sirach, was a Jew of Palestine who wrote about the year 180 B.C., some fifteen years before the Book of Daniel was written. The grandson of this Jesus revised the work and translated it into Greek when he was living in Egypt.

The more *Ecclesiasticus* is studied, the more it is loved. It ranks with the *Book of Job* as one of the two finest examples of the wisdom-literature



of the Jews. To the author "the fountain of wisdom is the word of God most high." "There is One wise and greatly to be feared, the Lord sitting upon His throne." "All wisdom cometh from the Lord and is with Him for ever." In this spirit of austere piety Jesus-ben-Sirach surveys the life of man. He has studied books and human nature with equal zest and insight. He is free from illusions, but his freedom has not hardened into cynicism. His reflections are not always original: could any man produce an original summary of proverbial philosophy? Yet as a phrase-maker he is great. "A fool travaileth with a word, as a woman in labour with a child," is most happily turned; and more than phrase-making has gone to the sentence, "There is a sinner that hath good success in evil things; and there is a gain that turneth to loss."

One of the most attractive things about Ben-Sirach is his strong, yet truly religious, common sense. Of worship without righteousness he is as scornful as the great prophets of his race. "The sacrifice of a just man is acceptable," he says significantly. He is contemptuous of the superstitions which seem to be always with us. "Divinations and soothsayings and dreams are vain: and the heart fancieth as a woman's heart in travail." With regard to the respective values of prayer and a physician's skill in sickness, he keeps the balance true. "My son, in thy sickness be not negligent; but pray unto the Lord, and He will make thee whole. Leave off from sin, and cleanse thy heart from all wickedness. Then give place to the physician, for the Lord hath created him: let him not go from thee, for thou hast need of him. There is a time when in their hands there is good success." Such sane teaching has lost none of its value by the lapse of time.

The best-known of all the passages in *Ecclesiasticus* is, of course, that which begins, "Let us now praise famous men." Its use in England, whenever school or college benefactors are commemorated, has become general; and however often we may hear the passage read, the appeal of its dignified beauty does not fail. "Their bodies are buried in peace, but their name liveth for evermore," is magnificent in its simplicity; and for sublime pathos there are few sentences in the English language which can equal the apparently unstudied words, "and some there be, which have no memorial; who are perished as though they had never been."

There is a second wisdom-book in the Apocrypha which bears the title *The Wisdom of Solomon*. Its author was a Palestinian Jew who was quite possibly a contemporary of St. Paul. He was, even more than the Apostle, under the influence of Greek religious ideas of his age. Christians at a first reading are tempted to class his work above *Ecclesiasticus*. They are inevitably attracted by its doctrine of the all-pervading presence and power



of the Spirit of God. "Thy counsel who hath known except Thou give wisdom, and send Thy Holy Spirit from above," is a sentence which might have come from the New Testament. Christians feel also that the book contains their own doctrine of Eternal Life. "For God created man to be immortal and made him to be the image of His own eternity"—such is a belief which will last as long as Christianity endures. Yet the book is not quite first-rate. Perhaps the writer was ambitious to make it supremely beautiful and for that reason failed to produce such unstudied perfection as we find, for instance, in St. Paul's great Eulogy of Love. But at times we forget to be critical. "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seem to die: and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction: but they are in peace." The man who could write these words of faith and hope had a true message for humanity.

There is only one other work in the Apocrypha which in our brief survey merits description. It is the *Second Book of Esdras*, which was written by a Jew after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Some Christian writer revised the work and added a preface; and the book thus edited was probably published soon after the year A.D. 120. Many Jews thought that the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple would begin the End of the Age: the calamity would prepare the way for a Messianic Kingdom of God. The influence of such ideas can be seen in the Gospels and even more explicitly in the *Book of Revelation*; and it is because the *Second Book of Esdras* has so many parallels to New Testament writings that scholars have studied it minutely. The book, in fact, helps us to understand what was the religious background of the early Christian missionaries. When the author wrote, the breach between Judaism and Christianity had not become complete. In the book there is the "larger, broader, more genial spirit of Judaism," which passed away with the triumph of Jewish legalism a generation later. Whenever Christianity has been true to the temper of its Founder, it has preserved this spirit. Because of its presence, early leaders like St. Paul and St. John freed their faith from Jewish fetters; and, by using the language and ideas of the Greek world, commended the Gospel to the Gentiles.

*The Second Book of Esdras* is but one among many works which have precariously survived to show the religious influences which fashioned the growth of Christianity. This literature links the Old Testament to the New. Study of it is a fascinating branch of research; but it merely confirms the fact that Christianity would never have come into existence had not men felt that Jesus, by His life and teaching, in a manner unparalleled, revealed God to the world.



## § 7

## THE NEW TESTAMENT

The books of the New Testament were written in Greek and all the writers, except possibly St. Luke, were Jews. But their Greek was not the language of Homer, nor even of Thucydides or Plato ; it was Hellenistic Greek, the popular language in which, in the first century of our era, men spoke to their friends and wrote to their wives. The literary Greek of that period was artificial, "fine writing," which tried to copy classical models of style. New Testament Greek seemed a thing apart, until quite recently family and business letters of the same age were discovered in the sand of Egypt. Then its true nature was revealed.

The New Testament writers wisely used this popular language, for they sought to spread Christianity not merely among a cultured minority, but as widely as possible. For the most part their converts came from what we should now call the lower-middle classes. To this grade of society most of Christ's intimate disciples belonged. Some, like the sons of Zebedee, were probably well-to-do ; but all of them were above the status of the slave. The early missionaries welcomed men and women of all classes. Though they used popular Greek, we must not think of them as ill-educated. St. Paul, who received a thorough theological training, seems to have been the son of a man of good position in his native city. Both St. Luke and St. John the Evangelist were men of ability and culture ; and all the other New Testament writers were able to express themselves in Greek, though it was probably in no case their native tongue.

Though the New Testament writers used a non-literary language, they often reached, as our Authorised Version shows, a splendid dignity. Convinced that they had a great message, they wrote naturally and directly. St. Mark's Greek is rough ; but with great brevity he gives us a singularly vigorous and effective memoir. St. Paul dictated his letters to a secretary. We have in them unfinished sentences, involved arguments, rapid changes of thought. As we read them, Paul the preacher rises before us. As we study them, we are amazed by the fertility of his mind, its subtlety and flexibility, its creative power ; and at times he reaches levels of eloquence unsurpassed in literature. A modern scholar describes St. John's writing as "correct enough in grammar, but simple to baldness and with no sense of idiom." Yet, though he struggles in this way with a language not his own, he has produced in the Fourth Gospel and in his First Epistle two masterpieces of religious literature. Words recur ; simple detached sentences follow one another : there is no ornament ; all seems "thin



and abstract." We should expect complete failure ; we get the purest spiritual beauty. The mystic and philosopher speaks, as it were, a child's language ; yet none other has enriched so greatly man's spiritual understanding. St. Luke is the most brilliant writer in the New Testament. His ease and grace of style, his wide sympathies, his sensitiveness, make him peculiarly attractive to modern readers. His descriptive power, as we see in his account of St. Paul's shipwreck, is remarkable ; and anyone who doubts his literary skill should try to rewrite the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Yet, of course, that parable came from Jesus, perhaps with little change ; and the literary quality of His teaching we cannot ignore.

Even in a literary discussion of the New Testament it is quite impossible to ignore Jesus of Nazareth. His personality dominates the whole collection of books and gives it its inherent unity. His teaching as to God and Man, His death, the perfection of His character, His significance for humanity—with such matters the New Testament writers are almost exclusively concerned. When we reflect that, for the most part, these writers had not known Jesus personally, that their witness is at second-hand, we realise how firm and deep must have been the impress which Christ made on those who were with Him during His brief mission. There is, in the main outlines of the picture which we have of Him, no blurring. We know His thought, His temper, His character—in a word, His quality—as we know that of few men in history.

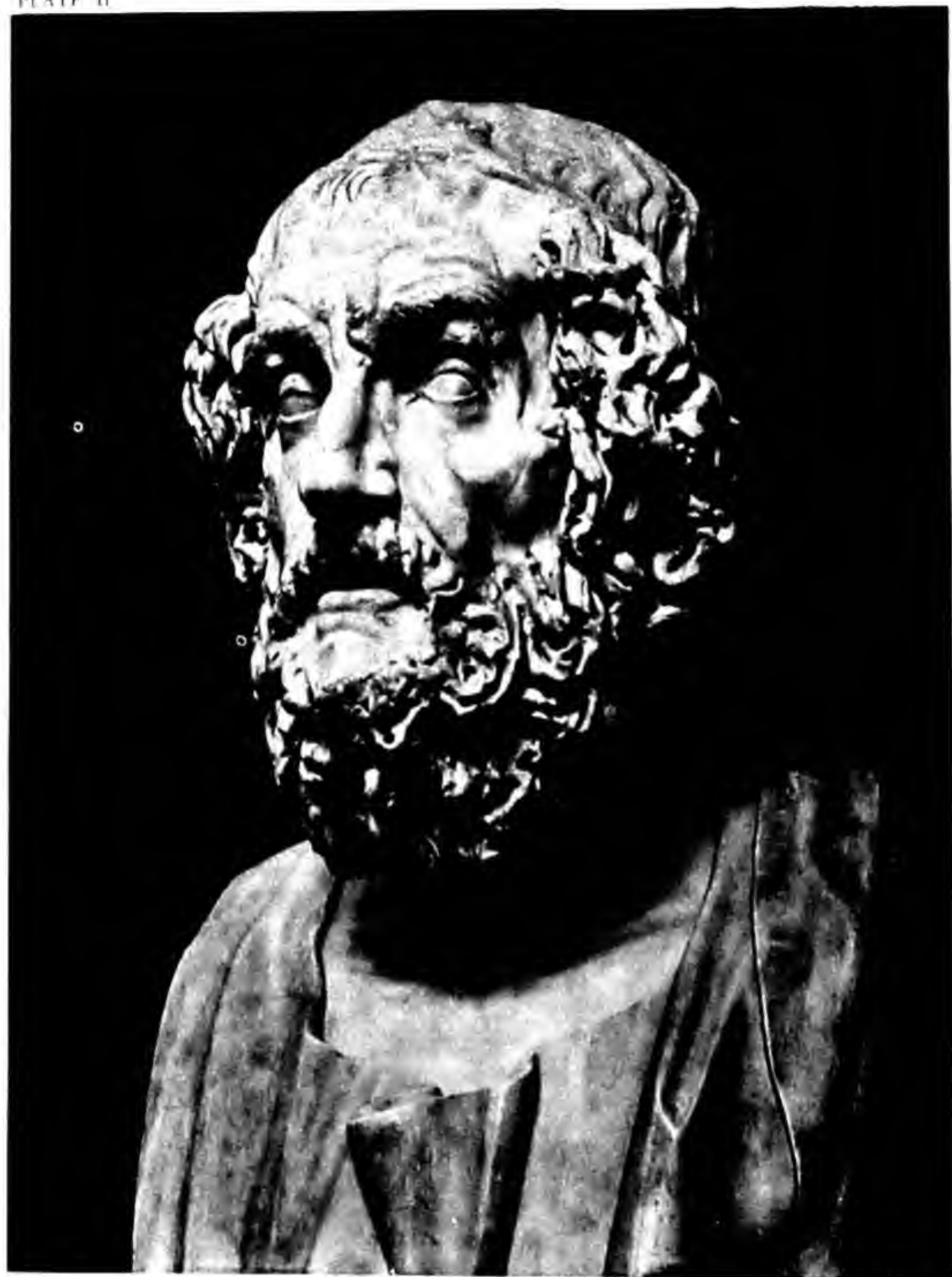
Probably the records of His teaching given in the Gospels are more exact than we should expect. It is true that at least thirty years passed after His death before any of the Gospels were written. But the Jews cultivated a verbal memory, whereas we trust to written records ; so it may well be that even after half a century accurate fragments of His teaching were preserved. Probably Jesus was born in 6 B.C. and crucified in A.D. 29. He normally used the Aramaic dialect of Palestine ; but He knew Hebrew, and probably could speak Greek. A century before His birth the population of Galilee was largely non-Jewish : it was " Galilee of the Gentiles " ; and, in Christ's lifetime, Capernaum and the adjacent towns were as much Græco-Syrian as Jewish. Near Nazareth, a town of possibly some 10,000 people, ran great high roads connecting some of the chief cities of the Levant. Thus, though Jesus came from a carpenter's cottage, His youth was not entirely remote from the great world. Yet, of course, above all He was Himself. As Professor Peake says, " No figure in history is more marked by perfect poise and mental balance, none more utterly sincere, more searching in His moral judgments, more relentless in His exposure of unreality." The quality of His teaching is shown most vividly in the great parables and in that collection of His sayings which we call the Sermon on the Mount. The sayings bear the unmistakable stamp of absolute





W. F. Mansell

PORTION OF A TABLET TELLING THE STORY OF THE DELUGE. INSCRIBED ABOUT THE YEAR 4000 B.C., IT IS PROBABLY THE OLDEST EXISTING EXAMPLE OF WRITING

*W. F. Mansell*

## HOMER

The Homeric poems mark the beginning of literature, and nothing that has been written since approaches them in the splendour of their language or the dramatic interest of their plots. They were probably not the work of one man, although they will always be associated with the name of Homer; they were the collection of songs and stories that had been related from generation to generation for thousands of years, and they have inspired the greatest poets through all the ages.





*Prado, Madrid*

*W. F. Mansell*

"THE FORGE OF VULCAN," BY VELASQUEZ

Vulcan was the God of Fire and Artificer in Metals. Homer relates that Zeus banished him from Heaven for rebellion.

ΜΟΥΣΩΣΕΜΠΟΙΗ  
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ΚΑΙ ΑΠΕCΤΗΛΕΝ Ε  
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ΝΕΥΩΝ ΟΙ ΕΑΛΛΗ  
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 ΑΥΤΗΕΧΕΙΡΗΤ

## A PAGE OF THE CODEX SINAITICUS

This Codex is one of the oldest manuscripts of the Greek Bible, and was written about A.D. 380.





W. F. Mansell

"TOBIT WITH THE ARCHANGEL," BY BOTTICELLI

One of the many famous pictures which show the popularity of stories from the Apocrypha at the time of the Renaissance.

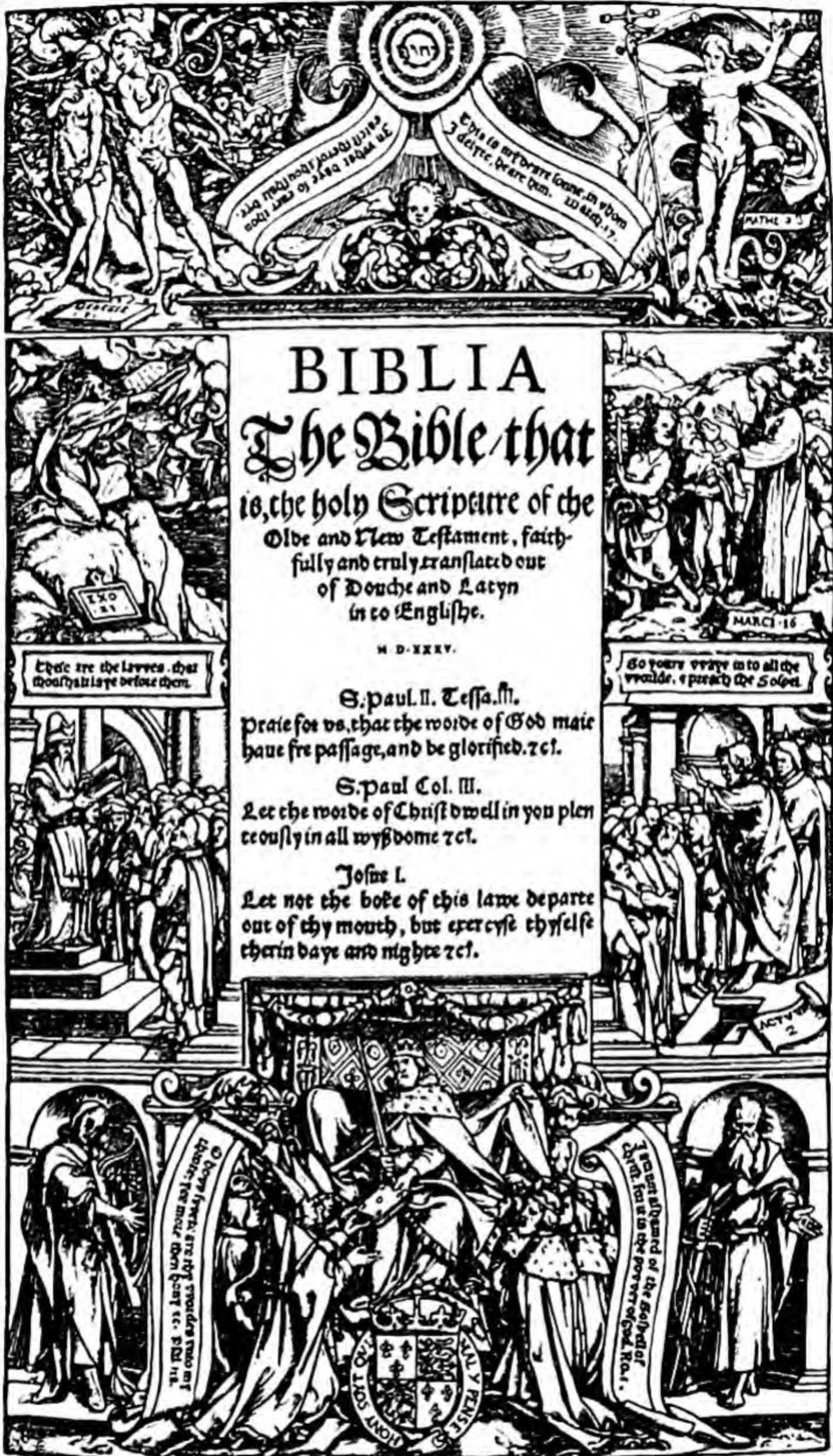


*W. F. Mansell*

"ERASMUS," BY HOLBEIN

The great Renaissance scholar, who produced the first printed Greek Testament.





Picture Post Library



*Picture Post Library*

### BUDDHA PREACHING

Statue discovered at Sarnath, 1904

The great Indian philosopher, Gautama the Buddha, lived about 500 B.C. He taught that "deliverance from suffering is to be obtained through the suppression of desire."



religious genius. In them the finest moral idealism is enforced by epigram and paradox. The commands are direct, unhesitating, and sincere. A shrewd simplicity goes hand-in-hand with a noble certainty. To the speaker Heaven is as real as earth. He lives with God more than with men. He has a sure insight into the human heart and an equally sure understanding of the nature and purpose of God. He never hesitates, is never at a loss. His mind is amazingly fertile, quick to unify apparent contradictions. He has, if we may use the metaphor, the creative genius of a great moral and religious artist. In Him is the austere dignity which great wisdom gives. His calm authority inspires awe and respect. For the rest we will only say that He has been revered and loved as no other man in human history. So it has come to pass that the four Gospels have been printed more frequently and read more often, more intently, and more affectionately, than any books ever written.

The earliest of them is the *Gospel according to St. Mark*, which was apparently written about the time of the fall of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, though it may be some ten years older. It probably was founded on "the rough popular preaching" of St. Peter and the earliest missionaries. Its author was John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas and at intervals the companion of St. Paul. When the men who had known Jesus were passing away, St. Mark wrote down the honest, effective, oft-told story which had been their "good-news," their Gospel. He included also an account of the last days of John the Baptist, which he probably got from some follower of that prophet; and inserted the Little Apocalypse (chapter xiii.) in which some Christian Jew had mingled Christ's prediction of the doom of Jerusalem with his own vision of the End of the Age.

The *Gospel according to St. Luke* and the *Acts of the Apostles* are due to a single author, who in the latter half of the *Acts* has incorporated sections of a diary kept by one who travelled with St. Paul when he was taken as a prisoner to Rome. That the diarist was St. Luke and that he wrote both the Gospel which bears his name and the *Acts* is very probable. It may be that the *Acts* contains no account of St. Paul's martyrdom because it was written before that event; in that case the Gospel must be dated about A.D. 60. On the other hand, many scholars believe that it was written a generation later; and some assume that an unknown editor used St. Luke's diary. It has now been established, by ingenious and quite conclusive arguments, that both St. Luke and the author of the *Gospel according to St. Matthew* used *Mark* together with another early document, now lost. This document scholars call Q. It was a supremely important record of the teaching of Christ, which the Apostle Matthew had written. A large piece of it was incorporated wholesale in our first Gospel as the Sermon on the Mount. Because of this fact, the first Gospel bears the name of St.



Matthew ; but it was really written by an unknown Jewish Christian of Palestine about the year A.D. 80. He used, besides *Mark* and *Q*, a collection of proof-texts to show that Christ was the fulfilment of Jewish prophecy. This way of using the Old Testament was in accord with allegorical methods of interpretation common among Jewish rabbis of the time : we do not deem it satisfactory. In *Matthew* we also find that Church practices, which had grown up during the half-century since Christ's death, were believed to have His authority. The book is well suited for reading at public worship ; and was placed first among the Gospels because it was for long most highly esteemed. The modern world values *Mark* more highly because it is more primitive. Yet at one time *Mark* was in danger of being lost, like *Q*. The end of it has perished. As Professor Burkitt says, all our manuscripts are derived from a single tattered copy. St. Luke, far more than the author of the first Gospel, was a historian in the modern sense. Besides *Mark* and *Q*, he managed to reach highly valuable sources of information. From these came incidents that women were especially likely to have remembered : from them also came the great parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, which he alone has preserved.

The *Fourth Gospel* still remains an enigma : its authorship and its historical value are fiercely disputed. It is not a biography so much as a spiritual interpretation of the life of Christ. It stands in somewhat the same relation to the other Gospels as does Plato's *Apology* to a life of Socrates. Without doubt, the author also wrote the three *Epistles of St. John* : without doubt he preserved accurate traditions of the career of Jesus which are independent of, and sometimes correct, the other Gospels. But his theology is a development of that of St. Paul ; he is " St. Paul's best commentator." Probably St. John, the beloved disciple, the son of Zebedee, in the beginning made his own intimate knowledge of Christ the basis of addresses and meditations. The memory of these was preserved by a group of followers, who were also influenced by St. Paul's teaching and by current Greek philosophy. And finally some man of genius among the group produced within the period A.D. 100-115 the Gospel which bears St. John's name. Whatever its origin, it is, as Clement of Alexandria called it towards the end of the second century, the " spiritual " Gospel. The writer clearly stated his purpose in composing it in the words with which the book ended, before the final chapter was added as an appendix. It was " written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

In the New Testament there are probably ten genuine *Epistles of St. Paul*. The first to be written, the two letters to the *Thessalonians*, must be dated about A.D. 50 : they are probably the earliest works in the New Testament. At intervals of a year or two between each, there followed the *Epistles to*



the *Corinthians*, *Romans*, and *Galatians*. The remaining letters to the *Colossians*, *Philemon*, the *Ephesians*, and *Philippians* were probably written about A.D. 60. It is, however, just possible that *Ephesians* is not a genuine Epistle of St. Paul: its vocabulary differs somewhat from that of the undoubted letters. St. Paul was probably born about the same time as Christ, converted a few years after the Crucifixion, and executed during Nero's persecution of the Christians in A.D. 64. His Epistles thus cover little more than the last ten years of his life. They are true letters, and not theological treatises in disguise. There is in them little systematic unity, and they show a surprisingly rapid development of thought. The later Epistles contain many echoes of the Pagan mystery-religions. In the "mysteries," Professor Gilbert Murray says, men sought "for some magic of redemption in which purification and passionate penitence should count for more than a mere upright life." To this end men were initiated into mystical brotherhoods, which had sacraments and fasts: they believed that thereby they could obtain communion with some deity and immortality through salvation. It was natural that converts to Christianity from these forms of faith should retain many of their old ideas. What surprises us is that St. Paul, with his Jewish background, should have been so willing to use the language of these alien cults. With their magic he had no sympathy: he remained a Jew for whom faith issuing in righteousness was all-important. But, as Dr. Inge says, though he "was ready to fight to the death against the Judaizing of Christianity, he was willing to take the first step, and a long one, towards the Paganising of it."

The debt which Christianity owes to St. Paul is so vast that we need not try to measure it. There is indeed a danger that he, and not Jesus, may be thought of as the virtual founder of the Christian faith. Against such exaggeration we ought to guard ourselves. In a sense the Apostle created Christian theology; but, in so doing, he only gave form to Messianic claims which Christ made for Himself. The body is St. Paul's: his Master gave the spirit and the life.

The Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus* which bear the name of St. Paul are almost certainly "much-edited fragments" of genuine letters of the Apostle. They lay emphasis on details of Church organisation which, by natural development, became important a generation after St. Paul's career ended. Their language is unlike his: and above all we miss the ringing note of his evangelical faith. If we assume that they took their present shape about A.D. 100, we shall not go far wrong.

The *Epistle to the Hebrews* bears in its title St. Paul's name: but from quite early times men of insight saw that he could not have been its author. It was written about the year A.D. 80, possibly for Jews in Rome, where it was known before the end of the first century. It is the most elaborate



literary work in the New Testament, a short treatise rather than a letter. Because of its polished precision we still find it fairly easy to read, though its Jewish background of High Priest and sacrifice and its allegorical use of Scripture are foreign to our thought. There are in it some finely eloquent passages.

The *First Epistle of Peter* and the *Epistles of James and Jude* are all short works, and there is no agreement among scholars as to their authorship and date. *James* is the most Jewish book in the New Testament: its note of kindly authority and its atmosphere of simple goodness make it singularly attractive. If it was written by "the brother of the Lord," it must be one of the earliest Christian writings which have survived. The *First Epistle of Peter* has originality and a certain distinction: it is interesting in that it stands, as it were, midway between St. Paul's Hellenism and the Judaic Christianity of St. James. *Jude* is mainly remarkable because the writer refers to late Jewish legends preserved in works called *The Book of Enoch*, and *The Assumption of Moses*. The so-called *Second Epistle of Peter* is the latest book in the Bible. It was written between the years A.D. 130-150, and has little historical and no literary value.

The *Revelation of St. John the Divine* is a book of remarkable grandeur and power. It is the work of a Jew who, though he wrote in Greek, thought in Hebrew and constantly used Hebrew idioms. Its style proves conclusively that its author was not the St. John of the Fourth Gospel. The greater part of it is poetry rather than prose: and the poetry has rare beauty and sublime simplicity.

Dr. Charles gives, as an example of its character:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth;  
For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away  
And there was no more sea.  
And the holy city, New Jerusalem, I saw  
Coming down out of heaven from God,  
Made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

The seer, whose visions are so rich in imagery and spiritual insight, was apparently a Christian from Galilee who migrated to Ephesus and completed his book during the persecution of Domitian about the year A.D. 95. Like the writer of the *Book of Daniel*, he used the later Jewish form of prophecy which we term Apocalyptic. His object was to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God upon earth, and to assure the persecuted Christians of the final triumph of goodness. That triumph will be realised when "the kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ." The faithful are to follow wherever the Lamb that was slain may lead: for them, whether they live or die, there can be no defeat. With such splendid optimism the Bible ends.



## § 8

## TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

After the time of Ezra (450 B.C.) Hebrew gradually ceased to be a living language. When Jesus taught, though Hebrew was still used in worship, the Jews of Palestine spoke a dialect called Aramaic. The great international language at that time was Greek. In fact, after Alexander the Great (330 B.C.) conquered the Persian Empire, Greek speedily became the common speech of the Jews who spread over the eastern Mediterranean in pursuit of trade. In Alexandria there was, from its foundation, a large Jewish colony ; and for their needs a translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek was begun about the year 240 B.C. It was probably finished within the next two centuries ; and is known as the Septuagint. It contained a number of works, now in our Apocrypha which were not in the Hebrew Old Testament. This Greek version is especially important because New Testament writers very frequently quote it when they refer to passages in the earlier part of the Bible. The New Testament itself was originally written in Greek ; and until about the year A.D. 200 the Christian Church normally used Greek Scriptures. About that time these Greek Scriptures were translated into Latin. Some two centuries later the great scholar Jerome made a more accurate Latin translation of the whole Bible. For this purpose he used, not the Septuagint, but the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. He thus produced the *Vulgate*, which to this day remains the standard Latin translation of the complete Bible.

The first complete English version of the Old and New Testaments resulted from Wycliffe's attempt to evangelise England. In the fourteenth century the Church in England was wealthy and powerful ; formal worship was magnificent ; but, as Chaucer's writings plainly show, there was dire need of a religious revival. Wycliffe saw the need ; and, like the Reformers a century and a half later, realised that the Bible must be the basis of Christian teaching. So in order that his " poor preachers " might " faithfully scatter the seed of God's Word," he and his followers produced about the year A.D. 1382 a translation of the Scriptures, made from the Latin Vulgate. The officials of the unreformed Church sought to prevent its circulation. But it spread far and wide, though printing was unknown and only manuscript copies could be obtained. Wycliffe had the insight of a great spiritual leader. May we contend that he knew the religious temperament of his countrymen and divined that they would love the Bible if they could have it in their own tongue ?

By the end of the fifteenth century printing had been discovered, and



the great Dutch scholar Erasmus published the first Greek Testament in A.D. 1516. Erasmus lived and lectured at Cambridge while beginning to prepare his work ; and the fame which the University thus gained as a home of the new learning helped to make it the intellectual centre of the English Reformation. To Cambridge in A.D. 1515 there came an Oxford scholar named William Tindale, who was henceforth to devote his life to translating the Bible from the original Greek and Hebrew. Tindale's New Testament was published in A.D. 1526 ; and, when he was martyred abroad ten years later, he had finished about half of the Old Testament. Meanwhile, in the year A.D. 1535, Miles Coverdale gave to the world the first printed English Bible. Revised versions then began to appear in rapid succession, as scholars and divines worked with enthusiasm and skill in the golden age of English literature. Finally our Authorised Version was published in 1611 ; and, notwithstanding the greater accuracy of the Revised Version published in 1885, it remains *the* Bible of the English-speaking peoples.

The supreme literary excellence of the Authorised Version has made it the greatest of English classics. Owing to the superb beauty of its language, the Bible has an importance in our literature which is unparalleled elsewhere. It has been well said that its English "lives on the ear like a music that can never be forgotten." To the fortunate chance that it was made in the sixteenth century, when our language was in its vigorous prime, we must attribute its extraordinarily fine quality. Yet, if any one man deserves especial praise for his share in the work, it is Tindale. More than four-fifths both of the New Testament and of the Pentateuch is his ; and the influence of his magnificent prose is manifest throughout the whole version. He described himself with sincere humility as "speechless and rude, dull and slow-witted" ; but, if he had not the pen of a ready writer, there was magic in his style. As a scholar he was laborious, accurate, and honest. For him "every part of Scripture had one sense and one only, the sense in the mind of the writer." He regarded his work as a Divine Service to which he had been called, and solemnly protested that he never altered one syllable against his conscience. Moreover, he fully realised that the English language is peculiarly fitted to translate the Bible. "The Greek tongue agreeth more with the English than with the Latin. And the properties of the Hebrew tongue agree a thousand times more with the English than with the Latin." Above all, he sought to serve the common people. In early manhood, speaking to one of his Cambridge friends, he said, "If God spare me life, ere many years I will cause the boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scriptures than you do." The spirit which inspired Tindale gave us the Authorised Version.

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the influence of that version on the



English language and on English thought. The Bible made English Puritanism ; and the Puritan tradition has fostered in the British and American peoples most of their best and distinctive qualities. From the Bible Milton and Bunyan took the inspiration of their poetry and allegory. In the Bible Cromwell and the Pilgrim Fathers found that which made them honourable, self-reliant, and steadfast. Bible in hand, Wesley and Whitefield transformed their country. In England all the great Victorians, and in America men so diverse as Emerson and Walt Whitman, showed the direct influence of the Authorised Version. It fashioned the art of Browning and George Eliot, Ruskin and Watts. John Bright, supreme among English orators in the nineteenth century, was essentially a man of one book, the Bible. So, too, was Abraham Lincoln, genius alike in statecraft and speech.

Despite the beauty and scholarly faithfulness of these two great translations, however, it was felt by some Christian thinkers around the beginning of the twentieth century that the archaistic language of the Bible militated against its acceptance by the modern mind. Foremost among these were Dr. Richard Francis Weymouth, the headmaster of an important school, and Dr. James Moffatt, a Scottish divine. To add to the need for fresh translation much new evidence and many fragments of early manuscripts had come to light, and the "Higher Criticism" had brought lively erudition.

So, in 1901, a group of anonymous scholars made a translation based on Westcott and Hort's Greek text, which had been published first in 1881. This *Twentieth Century New Testament* endeavoured to exclude all words and phrases not used in current English.

Two years later it was followed by *The New Testament in Modern Speech*, by Dr. Weymouth, who was anxious to produce a version acceptable to modern youth. In this New Testament the type-setting departed from the traditional division into "verses," narrative and dialogue being set out and paragraphed after the manner used in ordinary contemporary literature, the speech being put between inverted commas, and headlines inserted to each story or incident.

The Moffatt Bible was published in 1913. James Moffatt employed frankly idiomatic modern language, and based his great scholarship on the newly available manuscripts and the findings of the higher criticism. His translation slightly shocked some to whom the traditional archaisms were sacrosanct, but it gave a new reality to the sacred text. Naturally the most beloved passages, such as the Beatitudes or St. Paul's homily on Love in his first letter to the Corinthians, suffer most in these modernised versions ; but much of the rest is revived.

The next outstanding experiment was that of Dr. R. G. Moulton, a Lancashire man who had become Professor of Literature at Chicago



University, and who based upon the Revised Version his *Modern Reader's Bible*, presenting it in a contemporary literary form instead of the traditional one. This idea was carried even further in *The Bible designed to be read as Literature*, where the editor selected all that he deemed relevant from either the Authorised or the Revised Versions and presented the material in purely literary form. The stress here, however, was on the literary rather than any religious significance. Many lesser of these contemporary versions have appeared, especially in America, with varying degrees of success.

Greatest of the new versions has been the publication of the New Authorised Version prepared by a group of eminent scholars under the chairmanship of the Rev. Dr. C. H. Dodd. The issue of the New Testament in 1961 created world-wide controversy. The idea is to make the Scriptures intelligible in modern English. Inevitably much of the poetry is lost, but there is a greater sense of urgency, especially for the younger generation, in the language of the twentieth century.

One other, rather experimental, scheme has been the rendering of the *New Testament in Basic English*. The whole Bible is projected. This version of the English language limited to approximately 800 words has been prepared by Mr. C. K. Ogden and a group of Cambridge philologists for especial use in parts of the world where a simple form of English is in demand. The rendering of the Bible into this simplified form was a daring task, and was made under the supervision of Dr. Hooke, Professor of Old Testament Studies in London University.

Another important new version is the Bible prepared mainly for the Roman Catholic community by Monsignor Ronald Knox. This translation from the Latin Vulgate was undertaken at the request of the Catholic hierarchy, and the definitive edition, fully annotated and in one volume, was published in 1955. Printed mainly in ordinary narrative, it is a remarkable piece of scholarship and literature.

So in many ways this rightly called "Book of Books" pursues its ways as the world's best-seller. Under the auspices of The British and Foreign Bible Society and various missionary bodies the Scriptures have been translated into nearly 800 different languages, and 574,000,000 copies have been distributed by the one society alone.

The Bible is still the most precious part of the common heritage of the Anglo-Saxon races. The surface of our common culture is littered by transient enthusiasms, vulgar emotions, and moral wreckage; but below strong currents move steadily. In large measure these currents flow from the Bible, which now for four centuries has been the ultimate source of Anglo-Saxon idealism. The Bible has shaped the English language; but it has also been the supreme spiritually creative force in the civilisation of the British Empire and the American Commonwealth.



# READING LIST

- F. C. Burkitt : *The Gospel History and its Transmission*.  
 R. H. Charles : *Religious Development between the Old and New Testaments*.  
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 J. Hastings : *Dictionary of the Bible* (5 vols.).  
 A. Nairne : *The Faith of the Old Testament and The Faith of the New Testament*.  
 A. S. Peake : *Commentary on the Bible*.  
 H. E. Ryle : *The Canon of the Old Testament*.  
 W. Robertson Smith : *The Religion of the Semites*.  
 F. Kenyon : *The Bible and Modern Scholarship*. John Murray (1948).  
 F. Kenyon : *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*. Eyre and Spottiswoode (1941).  
 Macleod Yearsley : *The Story of the Bible*. Written from the Rationalist standpoint. (Thinkers' Library), Watts (1933).  
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 R. G. Moulton : *Modern Reader's Bible*.  
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 Stanley Cook : *Introduction to the Bible*. Penguin.  
*The Bible in English Life*. A National Book League annotated Catalogue. Cambridge University Press.  
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*The New English Bible* (New Testament). University Presses of Oxford and Cambridge (1961).

## IV

### THE ENGLISH BIBLE AS LITERATURE

SOME considerations of the Bible as literature may well be added to the description of its history in the preceding chapter.

There are people who demur to the study of the Bible as literature on the ground that the Word of God should be spared this kind of examination. Although it is difficult to take the contention seriously it is necessary to answer it. The best reason for studying the Bible as literature is that it *is* literature. The books of the Bible have every characteristic of literature, and in the course of time they have been subject to all the adventures and misadventures which beset literary documents.

To consider the Bible as literature is not to neglect, much less to deny, its sacred character. Indeed, those who still accept the doctrine of literal inspiration should be the first to perceive that the Divine method of expression would be itself divine, and that it would consist of using the most beautiful and moving language known to the men to whom it was delivered. If that be so, then the study of the beauty of the Bible as literature is more than relevant to the general study of the Bible as the Word of God.

#### § I

The highest advantage of the study of the Bible as literature is that it enables us, in some real measure, to understand what the Bible means. Written originally in Hebrew and Greek, painfully and inaccurately copied, doubtfully translated, transmitted to us through a thousand mists of doctrine and prejudice, it is yet still infused with the poetry, the visions, the metaphor, and the folk-lore of the East, to all of which we are alien. Thus the Bible, of all books, needs a commentary, and until comparatively recent years the kind of commentary which it has most conspicuously lacked is that which literature alone can supply. "To understand that the language of the Bible is fluid, passing, and *literary*, not rigid, fixed, and scientific, is the first step towards a right understanding of the Bible," says Matthew Arnold. To read the Bible *literally* is the way to scepticism; to read it as *literature* is the way to essential and reasonable belief. Burns knew this when he wrote his *Cotter's Saturday Night*. In two stanzas of that beautiful descriptive poem he presents the two great aspects of the English Bible;



its messages to the soul and conscience, and its indestructible literary quality. Take them in this order :

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,  
 They, round the ingle, form a circle wide ;  
 The sire turns o'er with patriarchal grace,  
 The big *ha'* Bible, ance his father's pride :  
 His bonnet reverently is laid aside,  
 His lyart haffets <sup>1</sup> wearing thin and bare ;  
 Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,  
 He wales <sup>2</sup> a portion with judicious care  
 And " Let us worship God," he says, with solemn air.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,  
 How Abram was the friend of God on high ;  
 Or Moses bade eternal warfare rage  
 With Amalek's ungracious progeny ;  
 Or how the royal bard did groaning lie  
 Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire ;  
 Or Job's pathetic plaint and wailing cry ;  
 Or rapt Isaiah's wild seraphic fire ;  
 Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Broadly speaking, in the first stanza we have the Bible as the Word of God, in the second the Bible as literature. The one and the other make that Bible which has passed into the life and speech of the people, ennobling both.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, lecturing at Cambridge on " Reading the Bible," once placed before his students a few great sentences like these :

Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty : they shall behold the land that is very far off.

And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality . . .

Then he said : " When a nation has achieved this manner of diction, these rhythms for its dearest beliefs, a literature is surely established. . . . The Authorised Version set a seal on our national style. . . . It has cadences homely and sublime, yet so harmonises them that the voice is always one. Simple men—holy men of heart like Izaak Walton and Bunyan—have their lips touched and speak to the homelier tune."

<sup>1</sup> lyart haffets, grey temples.

<sup>2</sup> wales, chooses.

Bunyan derived his thought and his style from the English Bible. And Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* and his *Pilgrim's Progress* lead us back to this well of homely religion and English undefiled. Bunyan knew the Authorised Version of the English Bible as perhaps no other man has known it. Its language became his breath. In passage after passage of *The Pilgrim's Progress* we seem to be reading the Bible through the medium of his own words. Take these words of Mr. Greatheart in the Valley of the Shadow :

This is like doing business in great Waters, or like going down into the deep ; this is like being in the heart of the Sea, and like going down to the Bottoms of the Mountains : Now it seems as if the Earth with its bars were about us for ever. But let them that walk in darkness and have no light, trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon their God. For my Part, as I have told you already, I have gone often through this Valley, and have been much harder put to it than now I am, and yet you see I am alive. I would not boast, for that I am not mine own Saviour. But I trust we shall have a good deliverance. Come let us pray for light to Him that can lighten our darkness, and that can rebuke, not only these, but all the Satans in Hell.

The language of the Bible shaped the speech of England, and Bunyan learned to use that language better than anyone else. In *The Pilgrim's Progress* the common people found no word or sentence they did not understand.

The Professor of English Literature in Cambridge University continued : " Proud men, scholars—Milton, Sir Thomas Browne—practise the rolling Latin sentence, but upon the rhythms of the Bible they, too, fall back. . . . The precise man Addison cannot excel one parable in brevity or in heavenly clarity : the two parts of Johnson's antithesis come to no more than this, '*Our Lord has gone up to the sound of a trumpet ; with the sound of a trump our Lord has gone up.*' The Bible controls its enemy Gibbon as surely as it haunts the curious music of a light sentence of Thackeray's. It is in everything we see, hear, feel, because it is in us, in our blood."

Coleridge said that it " will keep any man from being vulgar in point of style." Assuredly it kept the Bedford tinker from being vulgar, and hardly less Daniel Defoe. The Bible profoundly influenced Ruskin's style ; " it is ingrained," says his biographer, " in the texture of almost every piece from his pen." Macaulay refers to our Bible as " a book which, if everything else in our language should perish, would alone suffice to show the whole extent of its beauty and power." Milton declared : " There are no songs comparable to the songs of Zion, no orations equal to those of the prophets." Landor wrote to a friend : " I am heartily glad to witness your veneration for a book which, to say nothing of its holiness



or authority, contains more specimens of genius and taste than any other volume in existence." And Hobbes had the literary study of the Bible in mind when he shrewdly wrote in *Leviathan*: "It is not the bare words but the scope of the writer that giveth the true light by which any writing is to be interpreted; and they that insist upon *single texts*, without considering the *main design*, can derive nothing from them clearly; but rather by casting atoms of Scripture as dust before men's eyes, make everything more obscure than it is."

It has sometimes been asked whether the Authorised Version of 1604-1611 could have been done without the aid of men of letters, and even one or more poets. How could the cadences of the *Psalms*, the sublime questions and answers of the *Book of Job*, the rhapsodies of *Isaiah*, and the eloquence of Paul at Athens have been rendered by forty-seven scholars of whom not one has left his mark on literature? The extraordinary suggestion has been made that Shakespeare, who, in 1604, was at the height of his genius, may have been called in to give poetry and majesty to our Bible. Such surmises are not needed. The English language was then at its highest pitch and purity. Shakespeare had written most of his plays; two years earlier he had written *Hamlet*. The Elizabethan lyrical poets had taught Englishmen the music of their tongue. Spenser's verse was the river of that music. Dramatists like Massinger, Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, Marston, and Webster had brought up their cohorts of words and splendid phrasings. Literature was in the air. Never had there been a time so favourable to great results, nor has there been one since.

*Library Sri Yashwanth*  
*Srinagar*

§ 2

This is only part of the matter. The forty-seven did not, as is commonly supposed, produce a creative version of the Bible; as has already been pointed out, they produced a new and better one. The literary excellence of the Authorised Version was discovered rather than achieved. The new translators found it in all the English versions on which they worked, chiefly in those of Tindale and Coverdale. Wycliffe's translation from the Vulgate, completed by other hands so early as 1388, aided them the least. The wellspring was William Tindale, who had added to scholarship a command of noble English. He worked on the basis of Erasmus's Greek and Latin texts, the Vulgate, and Luther's German translations. On one side of the door of St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet Street the head of Tindale is carved in stone. The journalists who day by day inform or beguile the million are reminded of the man who vowed he would make the Bible known to the English ploughboy. And he did. When the Emperor



Charles had him strangled in what is now a suburb of Brussels the plough-boy was on the way to reading the Scriptures in the language of his fathers, and the habit of reading was being planted in England.

Miles Coverdale's Bible of 1535 was translated from the Latin and German with much reference to Tindale, and is often superior to Tindale's in its music. Matthew's Bible, edited by John Rogers, the Smithfield martyr, appeared in 1537 and contained unpublished versions by Tindale of the *Book of Joshua* onwards to the end of the *Second Book of Chronicles*. This Bible, something of a patchwork, was followed by the Great Bible, edited drastically by Coverdale; it was the first English Bible printed with government authority.

A rather later version is of interest because it was translated at Geneva by English exiles who had fled the Marian persecutions. While they laboured under the Alpine snows the fires of Smithfield were smoking. They were thus occupied for two years, and had not finished their revision when Elizabeth's accession made them free to return. This "Genevan" Bible was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth in 1560. It was more literal than those of Tindale and Coverdale, and also better founded on the Hebrew for the Old Testament and the Greek for the New. It is still known as the "Breeches" Bible, from its rendering of *Genesis* iii. 7: "They sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves breeches."

The later Bishops' Bible, 1568, superintended by Archbishop Parker, was virtually the immediate forerunner of the Authorised Version. It became known as the "Treacle" Bible from its text (*Jeremiah* viii. 22): "Is there no treacle in Gilead?"

When, therefore, King James's translators met in Westminster and Cambridge to give us the Bible of to-day they had a wealth of original and interpreted literature on which to work. They were instructed to follow the Bishops' Bible as closely as possible. Actually, their finest passages are from Tindale. It is instructive to take a view of the development of the language and literary quality of the English Bible, by quoting in succession the renderings of one short passage, *Hebrews* i. 7-9, as they appear in four versions, using the conspectus appended to Dr. Frederic G. Kenyon's *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*. As he remarks, it will be seen how greatly Tindale's translation has influenced the others, not least the Authorised Version:

#### Tindale, 1525

And vnto the angels he sayth: He maketh his angels spretes, and his ministers flammes of fyre. But vnto the sonne he sayth: God thy seate shal be for ever and ever. The cepter of thy kyngdom is a right cepter. Thou hast loved



rightewesnes and hated iniquitie : Wherefore hath god, which is Thy god, anoynted the with the oyle off gladnes above thy felowes.

*The Bishops' Bible, 1568*

7. And vnto the Angels he sayth : He maketh his Angels spirites, and his ministers a flambe of fyre.

8. But vnto the sonne (he sayth) Thy seate O God (shalbe) for euer and euer : The scepter of thy kingdome (is) a scepter of ryghteousnesse.

9. Thou hast loued ryghteousnesse, and hated iniquitie : Therefore God, euen thy God, hath annoynted thee with the oyle of gladnesse, aboue thy fellowes.

*The Authorised Version, 1611 (in the original spelling)*

7. And of the Angels he saith : Who maketh his Angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

8. But vnto the Sonne, *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, is for euer and euer : a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdome.

9. Thou hast loued righteousness, and hated iniquitie, therefore God, *euen* thy God, hath anointed thee with the oyle of gladnesse aboue thy fellowes.

*The Revised Version, 1881*

7. And of the angels he saith,  
Who maketh his angels winds,  
And his ministers a flame of fire :

8. but of the Son *he saith*,  
Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ;  
And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.  
Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity ;  
Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee  
With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

§ 3

In the last version the passage is printed, as it ought to be, as poetry. In our Authorised Version, prose is cut up into "verses" (an arrangement unknown until the Genevan translators adopted it), but all the sweet or magnificent outbursts of poetry are printed as prose. For these reasons Professor Moulton declares roundly in his invaluable work, *The Literary Study of the Bible*, that the Bible is the worst printed book in the world. The eye is not allowed to help the mind in recognising its literary structure. It is as though we printed the poems of Shelley and Wordsworth as prose. Thus even the full beauty of the last words of the Sermon on the Mount is veiled by the form given to them. Yet these words are a perfect example

of that Hebrew poetry into which the prose of the Bible suddenly breaks when the feeling is exalted or the imagination touched :

Everyone therefore which heareth these words of mine  
                                   and doeth them,  
 shall be likened unto a Wise Man,  
 which built his house upon the Rock :  
                                   And the rain descended,  
                                   and the floods came,  
                                   and the winds blew,  
                                   and beat upon that house ;  
 and it fell not ;  
 for it was founded upon the Rock.

And everyone that heareth these words of mine,  
                                   and doeth them not,  
 shall be likened unto a Foolish Man,  
 which built his house upon the Sand :  
                                   And the rain descended,  
                                   and the floods came,  
                                   and the winds blew,  
                                   and smote upon that house ;  
 and it fell :  
 and great was the fall thereof !

These stanzas are from the Revised Version of 1881, in which several expressions are changed for the better. Here we have a beautiful poem in the free verse of the Hebrews. Note its perfect parallelism.

*Parallelism of thought and expression*—a sort of magnified alliteration—is the distinctive mark of all Hebrew poetry, of its proverbial literature, and of much of its narrative. Professor Moulton well described its movement. "Like the swing of a pendulum to and fro, like the tramp of an army marching in step, the versification of the Bible moves with a rhythm of parallel lines" ; and he illustrated this neatly to his students by referring them to verses 8-15 of the 105th Psalm. First read the passage, omitting all the alternate or parallel lines, thus :

He hath remembered his covenant for ever : the covenant which he made with Abraham, and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a statute, saying, "Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan," when they were but a few men in number, and they went about from nation to nation. He suffered no man to do them wrong, saying, "Touch not mine anointed ones."

You are now to read the passage in full, that is preserving all the parallelisms. What was prose is suddenly transmuted into a grand movement of verse :



He hath remembered his covenant for ever,  
 The word which he commanded to a thousand generations  
 The covenant which he made with Abraham,  
 And his oath unto Isaac ;  
 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a statute,  
 To Israel for an everlasting covenant :  
 Saying, " Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan,  
 The lot of your inheritance " :  
 When they were but a few men in number ;  
 Yea, very few, and sojourners in it ;  
 And they went about from nation to nation,  
 From one kingdom to another people.  
 He suffered no man to do them wrong :  
 Yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes ;  
 Saying, " Touch not mine anointed ones,  
 And do my prophets no harm."

The entire *Book of Job*, excepting only the first two chapters and part of the last, is poetry, and ought never to have been printed in any other form. Only then can we appreciate the full majesty of such a passage as this :

Hast thou given the horse strength ?  
 Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder ?  
 Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper ?  
 The glory of his nostrils is terrible.  
 He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength :  
 He goeth on to meet the armed men.  
 He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted :  
 Neither turneth he back from the sword.  
 The quiver rattleth against him,  
 The glittering spear and the shield.  
 He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage :  
 Neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.  
 He saith among the trumpets, Ha, Ha :  
 And he smelleth the battle afar off,  
 The thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

Or this :

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth ?  
 Declare, if thou hast understanding.  
 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest ?  
 Or who hath stretched the line upon it ?  
 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened ?  
 Or who laid the corner stone thereof ?  
 When the morning stars sang together,  
 And all the sons of God shouted for joy.  
 Or who shut up the sea with the doors,  
 When it broke forth as if it had issued out of the womb ?

When I made the cloud the garment thereof.  
And thick darkness a swaddling band for it,  
And brake up for it my decreed place,  
And set bars and doors,  
And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further :  
And here shall thy proud waves be stayed.

This parallelism obtains through all the moods of Hebrew poetry, though with variations which cannot here be displayed. And it is found to be almost miraculously appropriate to literary forms which are far apart. It gives pungency to mere worldly wisdom, as in *Proverbs* vi. 6 :

Go to the ant, thou sluggard ;  
Consider her ways, and be wise :  
Which having no guide,  
Overseer, or ruler,  
Provideth her meat in the summer,  
And gathereth her food in the harvest.  
How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard ?  
And when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep ?  
Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,  
A little folding of the hands to sleep :  
So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth,  
And thy want as an armed man.

In passing, note that wonderfully true and deadly simile, "as one that travelleth"—one that has far to come, may be, but yet comes nearer and nearer and at last arrives like footsore doom.

But now consider the different effect of the principle of repetition in the barbaric song of Deborah :

The kings came and fought,  
Then fought the kings of Canaan  
In Taanach by the waters of Megiddo.  
They took no gain of money.  
They fought from heaven ;  
The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.  
The river of Kishon swept them away,  
That ancient river, the river Kishon.  
O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.  
Then were the horsehoofs broken,  
By the means of the pransings, the pransings of their mighty ones.

Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be,  
Blessed shall she be above women in the tent.  
He asked water, and she gave him milk ;  
She brought forth butter in a lordly dish.



She put her hand to the nail,  
 And her right hand to the workmen's hammer ;  
 And with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head,  
 When she had pierced and stricken through his temples.  
 At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down :  
 At her feet he bowed, he fell :  
 Where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

In the Hebrew literature this principle of repetition—found in all others in degree—is so predominant that it simplifies the whole problem of translation. Matthew Arnold pointed out that by reason of its comparative omnipresence the effect of Hebrew poetry “can be preserved and rendered in a foreign language as the effect of other great poetry cannot.” The effect of Homer, of Virgil, or of Dante can never be successfully rendered because the literary architecture of these poets has to be pulled to pieces and cannot be rebuilt to alien music. “Isaiah’s, on the other hand, is a poetry, as is well known, of parallelism ; it depends not on metre and rhyme, but on a balance of thought, conveyed by a corresponding balance of sentence ; and the effect of this *can* be transferred to another language.” One may open the *Book of Isaiah* almost at random and discover the truth of this law. Take this passage :

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be laid low : and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain : And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry ? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field : The grass withereth, the flower fadeth : because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it : surely all flesh is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth : but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

This passage, like hundreds of others, serves to illustrate another habit of Hebrew poetry which has everything to do with its permanence. Metaphor is the soul of poetry, and here all the metaphors are simple and natural. The visions called up are such as are native to man’s understanding in all ages : the pathless desert, the frowning hills, the grass of the field.

#### § 4

The Hebrew mind was simple and the Hebrew eye was fixed on the common objects of life. The sun, the moon, and the stars, the wind and the rain, the darkness and depth of the sea, the cedars of Lebanon, the bulls of Bashan, the well or the pool, the winepress, the mill, the corn yellow to harvest, the green pastures and still waters, the rose of Sharon, the great

rock in a weary land, the potter's wheel, the husbandman's toil, the sparrow and the eagle, the wild goats and calving hinds, the hen gathering her chickens, silver and gold, spear and shield, flesh and bone—such are the objects of life, common to all ages, to which these old poets went for their imagery. In that immortal rhapsody on love at first sight, *Solomon's Song*, how marvellously are the swoonings and raptures of love expressed through the medium of everyday things :

Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah,  
Comely as Jerusalem,  
Terrible as an army with banners.  
Turn away thine eyes from me,  
For they have overcome me :  
Thy hair is a flock of goats  
That appear from Gilead.  
Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep  
Which go up from the washing . . .  
As a piece of pomegranate are thy temples  
Within thy locks.

. . . . .  
Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,  
Fair as the moon,  
Clear as the sun,  
And terrible as an army with banners ?  
I went down into the garden of nuts  
To see the fruits of the valley,  
And to see whether the vine flourished,  
And the pomegranates budded.  
Or ever I was aware, my soul made me  
Like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.

Beyond this realism Hebrew poetry never stretches. The abstract is unknown to it.

Yet there is another secret of the permanence of the Bible as literature at once simpler and greater. Human nature and its working-out in reward or punishment, the wisdom of life and the penalties of ignorance or neglect, have not changed since Abraham sat in the door of his tent in the heat of the day. They have not changed since he rose up early and saw Sodom and Gomorrah go up "as the smoke of a furnace." They have not changed since Sarah was jealous of Hagar, and Abraham groaned to cast out his bondwoman because of his son Ishmael ; nor since he saddled his ass to take Isaac into the land Moriah to be a burnt-offering to Jehovah. They have not changed since Isaac went out to meditate in the field at eventide, expectant of his bride, and saw the camels coming ; nor since Esau was honest and foolish, and Jacob wily and wise ; nor since Rachel came to



water her father's sheep at the well of Haran ; nor since Joseph's brethren said, " Behold this dreamer cometh," and cast him into a pit, and afterwards knew the dreamer as the master of Egypt and their own protector. They have not changed since Moses, accepting his own doom, said to Israel :

The eternal God is thy refuge,  
And underneath are the everlasting arms ;

nor since Ruth said to her husband's mother : " Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee : for whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God : where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried : the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." They have not changed since David triumphed over Goliath or Samson succumbed to the craft of Delilah.

If we turn to the New Testament, where in all the literature of all peoples shall we find a more moving story than this ?

And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad ? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days ? And he said unto them, What things ? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God, and all the people. And how the chief Priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he, which should have redeemed Israel : and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the Sepulchre ; and when they found not his body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of Angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us, went to the Sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said, but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken : ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ? And beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went, and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent : And he went in, to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one unto another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures ?

Simplicity and beauty of narrative can go no further.

The sacred associations of the New Testament make it difficult to treat some of its most sublime passages as literature. In a lower degree the same



may be said of the Old Testament. But there is a portion of Hebrew literature which, being apart from the whole and yet of it, can be studied with deep advantage and may even be the best door by which to enter the subject. We refer, of course, to the Apocrypha. At the age of sixty-three Dr. Samuel Johnson, the best-read man of his time, and one of the best-read men of all time, wrote in his diary, "I have never yet read the Apocrypha." Inasmuch as the Apocrypha contains literature of surpassing beauty, and a wisdom of life hardly less exalted than any that we find in the Old Testament, this was a strange confession. It went, indeed, a little further than the facts, for Johnson added, "I have sometimes looked into the Maccabees, and read a chapter containing the question, *Which is the strongest?*—I think in Esdras." The story is one of the finest in the Apocrypha. It tells how three young men of the guard of King Darius proposed that they should compete for the utmost favour of the King, to sit next to him, and to be called his cousin; and that the winner of this essay competition (for such in fact it was) should be he who most wisely answered the question, "What is the strongest thing in the world?"

The first wrote, "Wine is the strongest," and gave his reasons; the second wrote, "The King is the strongest," and gave his reasons; the third wrote, "Women are strongest, but above all things truth beareth away the victory." They read their replies before the King and a great concourse. The third competitor showed that women had borne the King, and all rulers, and all people, and that they led and ruled all men by their love and beauty, and their spells. But he concluded:

Great is the truth, and stronger than all things. All the earth calleth upon the truth, and the heaven blesseth it, all works shake and tremble at it, and with it is no unrighteous thing.

Wine is wicked, the King is wicked, women are wicked, all the children of men are wicked, and such are all their wicked works, and there is no truth in them. In their unrighteousness also they shall perish.

As for the truth it endureth, and is always strong, it liveth and conquereth evermore.

With her there is no accepting of persons, or rewards, but she doeth the things that are just, and refraineth from all unjust and wicked things, and all men do well like of her works. Neither in her judgment is any unrighteousness, and she is the strength, kingdom, power and majesty of all ages. Blessed be the God of truth.

All the people shouted assent, and Darius told the young man to ask of him what he would, "and more than was appointed in the writing," and to sit next to him, and be called his cousin.

So that, although Dr. Johnson had not read the Apocrypha, he had read a passage which must have appealed profoundly to him as a man who once said humbly, "Sir, I considered myself as entrusted with a certain



portion of truth," and on another occasion, "Without truth there must be a dissolution of society."

*The Book of the Wisdom of Solomon* contains splendid passages. Hear the writer's praise of Wisdom :

Wisdom reacheth from one end to another mightily,  
And sweetly doth she order all things.  
I loved her and sought her out,  
From my youth I desired to make her my spouse,  
And I was a lover of her beauty.  
In that she is conversant with God, she magnifieth her nobility :  
Yea, the Lord of all things himself loved her.

If a man desire much experience :  
She knoweth things of old, and conjectureth aright what is to come :  
She knoweth the subtleties of speeches, and can expound dark sentences  
She forseeth signs and wonders, and the events of seasons and times.  
Therefore I purposed to take her to me to live with me,  
Knowing that she would be a counsellor of good things,  
And a comfort in cares and grief.

Thus is Wisdom praised, but now hear Wisdom praise herself in the wild and lofty music of Hebrew poetry through the pen of Jesus the son of Sirach, the writer of *Ecclesiasticus* :

I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus,  
And as a cypress tree upon the mountains of Hermon.  
I was exalted like a palm tree in Engaddi,  
And as a rose-plant in Jericho,  
And as a fair olive tree in a pleasant field,  
And grew up as a plane tree by the water.  
I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon, and aspalathus,  
And I yielded a pleasant odour like the best myrrh  
As Galbanum and Onyx, and sweet Storax,  
And as the fume of frankincense in the Tabernacle.

I also came out as a brook from a river,  
And as a conduit into a garden.  
I said, I will water my best garden,  
And will water abundantly my garden bed :  
And lo, my brook became a river,  
And my river became a sea.  
I will yet make doctrine to shine as the morning,  
And will send forth her light afar off :  
I will yet pour out doctrine as prophecy,  
And leave it to all ages for ever.

Such is the exalted poetry, such the exhaustion of language, to be found in the Apocrypha.

In addition, it is packed with worldly wisdom, common sense, shrewd counsels about marriage and friendship, and lending and borrowing, and bargaining, and tact, and everyday prudence. One could show some of our best-known proverbs can be traced to these books. But we conclude by quoting a passage in which the writer we have just quoted turns his eyes—with a charity surpassing, perhaps, anything in the canonical books of the Old Testament—on the average man. After picturing the ploughman, the ox-driver, the carpenter, the graver of seals, the smith, and the poor porter, each at his work, he exclaims :

Without these cannot a city be inhabited.  
 And they shall not dwell where they will, nor go up and down :  
 They shall not be sought for in public counsel,  
 Nor sit high in the congregation :  
 They shall not sit on the Judges' seat,  
 Nor understand the sentence of judgment :  
 They cannot declare justice, and judgment,  
 And they shall not be found where parables are spoken.  
*But they will maintain the state of the world*  
 And all their desire is in the work of their craft.

That may not be the whole of man's civic wisdom, or of his social vision, to-day, but if not it is one of the noblest eulogies ever penned. It deserves to be as well known as that great tribute to genius and leadership in the same book :

Let us now praise famous men,  
 And our Fathers that begat us.  
 The Lord hath wrought great glory by them,  
 Through his great power from the beginning.  
 Such as did bear rule in their kingdoms,  
 Men renowned for their power,  
 Giving counsel by their understanding,  
 And declaring prophecies. . . .  
 Such as found out musical tunes,  
 And recited verses in writing.  
 Rich men furnished with ability,  
 Living peaceably in their habitations.  
 All these were honoured in their generations,  
 And were the glory of their times.  
 . . .  
 Their seed shall remain for ever,  
 And their glory shall not be blotted out.  
 Their bodies are buried in peace,  
 But their name liveth for evermore

The discovery some years ago of ancient Hebraic manuscripts in the caves bordering on the Dead Sea has proved an amazing addition to our know-



ledge of Biblical and Apochryphal literature. "The Dead Sea Scrolls," as they have come to be called, were the accidental find of a lad following his lost goat into a cave. There in a state of wonderful preservation he found the first of these writings which had evidently been hidden by the monks of the Essene sect when their near-by monastery was threatened by the Romans. Seven scrolls written on pigskin, wrapped in linen and put into jars, included a part of Isaiah, an important commentary on Habakkuk, and a Manual of Discipline of the Essene order. The reward given for these set up a wild search for further remains in hundreds of caves by the local population; and the archaeologists were overwhelmed by the thousands of fragments which came into their hands. Nothing of the importance of the original discovery occurred, but 40,000 manuscript fragments have been amassed and are under research at Manchester University: an enormous jigsaw puzzle for the scholars. The writings are in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.

Scholarship is not helped by the unsettled condition of the Near East and the enmity between Jews and Arabs. At Jerusalem itself a "Shrine of the Book" has been established, but the finds are only partly in Jewish hands.

Controversy rages among the savants of the world about the significance of the find. A certain parallel between the Essene story of the "Teacher of Righteousness" and his martyrdom and the Christian story of Jesus has led to sweeping claims that this Essene teacher is the original of the whole Christian story, but the theory is historically unacceptable and the resemblance is in any case little stronger than the parallel between Buddhism and Christianity. The date of the scrolls is another matter upon which authorities disagree. It is likely that they were hidden in A.D. 68 at the time of the punishment of the Jews by the Romans, but the actual writings, of course, date from much earlier than this and take us back to a period probably about 200 B.C. All these details and problems have already evoked a great deal of writing and discussion; and it may be many years before we fully understand the importance of this discovery of these 2,000 year old manuscripts, preserved for us in the warm salty air of caves 1,000 feet below sea level, and discovered by the accident of a strayed goat and a young goatherd's search for his animal.

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## THE SACRED BOOKS OF THE EAST

EVERY religion has its sacred book—generally a collection of hymns, legends, theological speculation, and directions for ceremonial rites. There is one curious difference between the Bible of the Christians and any other of the world's sacred books. Christianity is mainly the religion of the Western world—of Europe and America—but its Bible came to the West from the East. The sacred books with which this chapter is concerned were for the most part the creations of the countries where they are still held in veneration, and when that is not the case, as with the writings of Gautama the Buddha and Zoroaster, of contiguous countries. Wisdom comes from the East, but the wisdom that remains in the East is far less virile wisdom than the wisdom that has travelled westward. With the exception of the Koran and the Granth of the Sikhs, the sacred books of the East had their origin in a remote antiquity, and are sometimes the almost haphazard collection of the work of many men living in many ages.

## § I

## THE VEDAS OF THE BRAHMANS

The first of the sacred books in order of antiquity is the Vedas of the Brahmans. The Hindus, the adherents of the social conventions and complex polytheism generally known as Hinduism, form 70 per cent. of the population of the Indian peninsula. Racially they are in part descended from the Aryans, who, in an early stage of the world's history, crossed the Himalayas from the high plateau which was the cradle of the Aryan race. As is, of course, well known, all the great European races—the Latins, the Teutons, the Celts, and the Scandinavians—are of Aryan descent, as are the people of Persia. India was already thickly inhabited when the Aryans moved south, bringing with them their religion and their culture. The consequence was a mixture of races, the Aryan element retaining the position of an aristocracy through the caste system, and the development of a curious and almost incomprehensible religion. Hinduism, to apply one generic name to the system which includes the worship of thirty-three thousand different gods, almost every village having its own particular deity, is a

degradation of Brahmanism, which, in its original pure form, was brought from the north by the Aryan invaders four thousand years ago.

Most religions owe their institution to one great personality—Christianity to Jesus Christ, Buddhism to Buddha, Confucianism to Confucius, and so on. Hinduism and Brahmanism, on the other hand, cannot be traced back to any one great teacher. Orthodox Brahmanism teaches the existence of an all-embracing spirit called Brahma, the original cause and the ultimate goal of all living things. At its purest, therefore, Brahmanism became as absolutely monotheistic as Mohammedanism itself. But with the conception of an abstract all-embracing deity there arose a second belief in the existence of three great gods, each representing one aspect of absolute power. These gods are Brahma, the creator ; Vishnu, the preserver ; and Siva, the destroyer. According to an Indian legend, the first Brahma created the primordial waters, and in them placed a seed which became a golden egg. In this egg Brahma, the creator, was born, and after his birth he created the heaven and the earth from the two halves of the shell from which he had come. Another myth states that Brahma was born from a lotus which grew out of the body of the god Vishnu. Brahma, the creator, is usually represented as a bearded man with four heads and four hands. One hand holds a sceptre, the emblem of power ; another a bundle of leaves representing the Vedas, the sacred books which will presently be described ; another a bottle of water from the Ganges, the Hindu sacred river ; and the fourth a string of beads, representing prayer. It should be said that though Brahma is one of the three great titular deities of Brahmanism and Hinduism, he is by no means a popular god. In all India there are only four temples dedicated to his worship, and he possesses far fewer devotees than the gods of purely local eminence.

The most important characteristic of the Hindu social system is supplied by the castes—a religious creation. There were originally four castes—the Brahmans, the priests and teachers ; the Kshatriyas, the warriors ; the Vaisyas, farmers, merchants, and landowners ; and the Sudras, the hewers of wood and drawers of water. In the course of the ages, these four original castes have been subdivided into hundreds of minor castes, but with all the changes, the Brahmans, who took their name from the god Brahma, have retained their pre-eminent position. Unlike most priests, the Brahmans marry, and generally marry within their own caste, and they are undoubtedly more purely Aryan than any other modern Indians.

In the religion of the Hindu village to-day with its beast-shaped gods ; its faith in scores of amulets—dogs' teeth, crocodiles' teeth, the tusks of boars and elephants—its elaborate sacrificial ritual and countless prayers, little remains of the original Brahmanism except the belief in the transmigration of souls and in the doctrine of Karma, which teaches that after



many experiences in different bodies, the number of which is determined by the good or evil deeds done in the flesh, the soul finally finds release from individuality and is reabsorbed in Brahma, the all-embracing spirit. The doctrine, in other words, is that each individual soul is like Brahma and has neither beginning nor end ; the condition of every man's existence is the consequence of his acts in a previous existence. The soul, it is conceived, may have renewed individual existence in varying living forms until it is finally " freed from all taint of individuality and released from all activity or suffering," and finds its eternal bliss in the all-embracing spirit Brahma.

One must note the stubborn way in which Brahmanism and Hinduism have continued to exist despite the idealistic teaching of Gautama, the Buddha, despite the forceful and generally successful proselytism of Moslem conquerors, and despite all the efforts of Christian missions. The Brahman remains the teacher of the Indian people and the custodian of their traditions, and the Brahman still learns by heart the verses of the Vedas, the sacred writings which were recited thousands of years ago before the ancestors of these Brahman priests made their southward trek. When the Vedas were finally written out, they were written in Sanscrit, now a dead language, which bears the same relation to the languages of India as Latin bears to Italian, and which has been preserved in the Vedas exactly as Latin has been preserved in the ritual of the Roman Catholic Church. Though the Vedas now exist in manuscript, the pious Brahman, as we have said, still learns them by heart, since it was written : " Those who sell the Vedas, and even those who write them, those also who defile them, they shall go to hell."

The word " veda " means knowledge. The Vedas consist of four books of hymns and prayers, four collections of prose writings explaining the origin and the meaning of the hymns and the prayers, and two collections of theological speculations based on the poetical texts.

The hymns of the Rig-Veda are at least three thousand years old, that is, probably three hundred years older than the oldest book in the Bible, but they record the religious beliefs of a far more distant age, of the time when the Aryans were still living on the tableland north of the Himalayas, and before they had begun their emigrations westward to become the ancestors of the modern European peoples. So in these Vedas we have almost the words of a generation of men, from whom we are descended and who existed ages before the Greeks and the Romans.

The following are striking passages taken from the Upanishads, the philosophic section of the Vedas. The quotations are from Dr. L. D. Barnett's *Brahma Knowledge* :

Made of mind, bodied in breath, shaped in light, real of purpose, ethereal of soul, all-working, all-desiring, all-smelling, all-tasting, grasping this All, speaking



naught, heeding naught—this is my Self within my heart, smaller than a rice-corn, or a barley-corn, or a mustard-seed, or a canary-seed, or the pulp of a canary-seed—this is my Self within my heart, greater than earth, greater than sky, greater than heaven, greater than these worlds. All-working, all-desiring, all-smelling, all-tasting, grasping this All, speaking naught, heeding naught—this is my Self within my heart, this is Brahma ; to Him shall I win when I go hence. He with whom it is thus has indeed no doubt.

“What is the Self?”

It is the Spirit made of understanding among the Breaths, the inward light within the heart, that walks abroad, abiding the same, through both worlds. He meditates, as it were ; He hovers about, as it were. Turned to sleep, He passes beyond this world, the shapes of death.

This Spirit at birth enters into the body, and is blent with evils ; at death He passes out, and leaves evils.

## § 2

### THE BUDDHIST SCRIPTURES

Unlike Brahmanism, Buddhism can be traced back to the teaching of one man, Gautama. The founder of Buddhism was an Indian, and though Buddhism is an idealised development of Brahmanism, there is only a handful of Buddhists in India to-day. Buddhism is related to Brahmanism somewhat as Christianity is to Judaism or Protestantism to Roman Catholicism. Four-fifths of the modern Buddhists are Chinese, and large numbers of them are found in Japan, Korea, Tibet, Siam, and Ceylon.

Gautama was born in the north of Bengal between 600 and 500 B.C. He belonged to the ruling family of the country. He was rich and good-looking, married to a beautiful wife, and the father of one child, but his life of ease and plenty became insupportable.

When he was twenty-nine, he rode away from his home with one servant. After he had travelled a little way, he sent the servant back with his horse and his sword and changed clothes with a ragged beggar, as St. Francis did generations ago. For a time he lived in a cave with a number of learned men, and then, after a long, lonely struggle, during which he was “the loneliest figure in history battling for life,” he collected disciples in the city of Benares and taught them his doctrines. Gautama was one of the splendid figures in world history—lonely, self-sacrificing, inspired. Gautama’s last words were : “Decay is inherent in all component things. Work out therefore your emancipation with diligence.” After his death his words were repeated by his disciples, exactly as the words of Christ were repeated by St. Peter and his comrades after the sacrifice on Calvary. It was not till many years after his death that the teachings of Gautama were written down in what are called the Pitakas or Baskets. The Pitakas



were written in Pali, the spoken language of the common Indian people, which bears much the same resemblance to Sanscrit as Italian bears to Latin.

The teaching of Gautama has been described shortly by Mr. H. G. Wells in *The Outline of History*. The following passage summarises the Gospel of Buddha :

“The fundamental teaching of Gautama, as it is now being made plain to us by the study of original sources, is clear and simple and in the closest harmony with modern ideas. It is beyond all dispute the achievement of one of the most penetrating intelligences the world has ever known.

“We have what are almost certainly the authentic heads of his discourse to the five disciples which embodies his essential doctrine. All the miseries and discontents of life he traces to insatiable selfishness. Suffering, he teaches, is due to the craving individuality, to the torment of greedy desire. Until a man has overcome every sort of personal craving his life is trouble and his end sorrow. There are three principal forms the craving of life takes, and all are evil. The first is the desire to gratify the senses, sensuousness. The second is the desire for personal immortality. The third is the desire for prosperity, worldliness. All these must be overcome—that is to say, a man must no longer be living for himself—before life can become serene. But when they are indeed overcome and no longer rule a man’s life, when the first personal pronoun has vanished from his private thoughts, then he has reached the higher wisdom, Nirvana, serenity of soul. For Nirvana does not mean, as many people wrongly believe, extinction, but the extinction of the futile personal aims that necessarily make life base or pitiful or dreadful.

“Now here, surely, we have the completest analysis of the problem of the soul’s peace. Every religion that is worth the name, every philosophy, warns us to lose ourselves in something greater than ourselves. ‘Whosoever would save his life, shall lose it’; there is exactly the same lesson. . . .

“In certain other respects this primitive Buddhism differed from any of the religions we have hitherto considered. It was primarily a religion of conduct, not a religion of observances and sacrifices. It had no temples, and since it had no sacrifices it had no sacred order of priests. Nor had it any theology. It neither asserted nor denied the reality of the innumerable and often grotesque gods who were worshipped in India at that time. It passed them by.”

The Pitakas contain the exposition of the Buddhist doctrine, and they include ghost stories, prose aphorisms, various expositions and regulations for the discipline of Buddha’s followers, as well as psalms and hymns.

The following quotations will give some idea of the character of the Pitakas. In the second Pitaka there is a collection of verses called "The Path of Right." The extract is from Rhys Davids's *Buddhism* :

For never in this world does hatred cease by hatred ;  
Hatred ceases by love ; this is always its nature.

When by earnestness he has put an end to vanity,  
And has climbed the terraced heights of wisdom,  
The wise looks down upon the fools ;  
Serene he looks upon the toiling crowd,  
As one standing on a hill looks down  
On those who stand upon the plain.

It is good to tame the mind,  
Difficult to hold in, and flighty ;  
Rushing where'er it listeth ;  
A tamed mind is the bringer of bliss.

As the bee—injuring not  
The flower, its colour, or scent—  
Flies away, taking the nectar ;  
So let the wise man dwell upon the earth.

As long as the sin bears no fruit,  
The fool, he thinks it honey ;  
But when the sin ripens,  
Then, indeed, he goes down into sorrow.

One may conquer a thousand thousand men in battle,  
But he who conquers himself alone is the greatest victor.

Let no man think lightly of sin, saying in his heart, " It cannot overtake me."  
As the waterpot fills by even drops of water falling,  
The fool gets full of sin, ever gathering little by little.

Gautama's revolt against class distinctions and the prevailing caste system, is expressed in the following :

Not by birth does one become low caste,  
Not by birth does one become a Brahmin ;  
By his actions alone one becomes low caste,  
By his actions alone one becomes a Brahmin.

How like this is to John Ball's :

When Adam delved and Eve span,  
Who was then the gentleman ?



The study of Gautama's life and teaching does not help much towards the understanding of modern Buddhism, which has become a tangle of varying principles and practice, grafted on to materialistic polytheism. Some idea of the more exalted modern Buddhism can be obtained from Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*.

## § 3

## THE BOOKS OF CONFUCIUS

Another great outstanding name which belongs to about the same period as Gautama is that of Confucius. He "takes rank in China as practically the founder of its literature, of its system of morals, and of its religious ideal or standard." He was free, says one of his disciples, from four things: foregone conclusions, arbitrary determinations, obstinacy, and egoism. Mr. George Haven Putnam has tersely summed up the work of Confucius:

"What is known as the religion of Confucius, comprises in substance the old-time national or popular faith freshly interpreted into the thought and language of the later generation, and shaped into a practical system of morals as a guide for the action of the State and for the daily life of the individual citizen.

"It is interesting to compare the different forms taken by the earliest literary traditions of the different peoples of antiquity. The Greek brings to us as the corner-stone of his literature and of his beliefs, the typical epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; poems of action and prowess, commemorating the great deeds of the ancestors, and describing the days when men were heroes, and heroes were fit companions and worthy antagonists for the gods themselves.

"The imagination of the Hindus has evolved a series of gorgeous and grotesque dreams, in which all conditions of time and space appear to be obliterated, and in which the universe is pictured as it might appear in the visions of the smoker of hashish. It is difficult to gather from these wild fancies of the earlier Indian poets (and the earlier writers were essentially poets) any trustworthy data concerning the history of the past, or any practical instruction by which to guide the life of the present. The present is but a tiny point, between the immeasurable æons of the past and the *nirvana* of the future, and seems to have been thought hardly worth the attention of thinking beings.

"The Egyptian literary idea has apparently been thought out in the temple, and it is from the priests that the people receive the record of the doings of its gods and of the immeasurable dynasties of monarchs selected



by the gods to express their will, while it is also to the priests that the people must look for instruction concerning the duty of the present.

"The Assyrian records read, on the other hand, as if they were the work of royal scribes, writing under the direct supervision of the kings themselves. The gods are described, and their varied relations to the world below are duly set forth. But the emphasis of the narrative appears to be given to the glory and the achievements of such great monarchs as Sargon and Assurbanipal, as if a long line of scribes, writing directly for the king's approval, had continued the chronicles from reign to reign.

"The early literary and religious ideals of China took a very different form. We find here no priestly autocracy, controlling all intellectual activities and giving a revelation as to the nature of the universe, the requirements of the gods, and the obligations of men, obligations which have never failed to include the strictest obedience to the behests of the priests, the representatives of the gods. There are no court chronicles, dictated under royal supervision, and devoted, not to the needs of the people, but to the glorious achievements of the monarchs. Nor is there any great epic, commemorating the deeds of heroes and demigods. In place of these we find what may be called a practical system of applied ethics. Confucius was evidently neither a visionary dreamer nor a poet, nor did he undertake to establish any priestly or theological authority for his teaching. He gives the impression of having been an exceptionally clear-headed and capable thinker, who devoted himself, somewhat as Socrates did a century later, to studying out the problems affecting the life of the state and of the individual. With Socrates, however, the chief thing appears to have been the intellectual interest of the problem, while with Confucius the controlling purpose was evidently the welfare of his fellow-men. It was his aim, as he himself expressed it, through a rewriting of the wise teachings left us by our ancestors, so as to adapt them to the understanding of the present generation, to guide men to wise and wholesome lives, and to prepare them for a better future. The work of Confucius stands as the foundation stone of the literature, the morals, and the statecraft of China."

In so far as the Chinese are followers of Confucius, they may be said to have no religion, for religion is the recognition of a superhuman control of human affairs, and no such recognition was taught by the great Chinese philosopher, who was born about the year 550 B.C., at the time when the feudal system in China was breaking up in a turmoil of civil strife. Confucius was an apostle of order and an intense believer in the creation of a powerful central authority. His ideal was the Aristocratic Man—what Carlyle would have called a hero and Nietzsche a superman—who should prove his right to power by the greatness of his character. For some time he was the chief minister of the Duke of Lu, endeavouring to enforce morality by means



of etiquette, as if, nowadays, a reformer should insist that the first step towards the righteous life is dressing for dinner. After a time the duke preferred dancing-girls to his philosopher-minister, and Confucius was exiled. He spent the best years of life wandering from state to state, teaching wherever he went, and returning home in his old age to collect his wisdom in his books.

The wisdom of Confucius is contained in five books: *The Book of History*, *The Book of Changes*, *The Book of Poetry*, *The Book of Rites*, and *The Annals of Spring and Autumn*. To *The Book of History* Confucius only contributed a preface; to *The Book of Changes* he wrote several appendices; *The Book of Poetry* was compiled by him from ancient sources; and certain of his sayings have been added to *The Book of Rites*, which was in existence long before his time. Confucius himself protested that by *The Annals of Spring and Autumn* "men would know him and condemn him."

Until recent times, the Chinaman anxious to enter the public service was expected to pass an examination in the works of Confucius and in certain others of the Chinese classics—and in nothing else. Some idea of the teaching of Confucius and of the beauty of his writing may be gathered from the following translated passages quoted from Mr. Giles's *The Sayings of Confucius*:

The Master said: The higher type of man makes a sense of duty the groundwork of his character, blends with it in action a sense of harmonious proportion, manifests it in a spirit of unselfishness, and perfects it by the addition of sincerity and truth. Then indeed is he a noble character.

The higher type of man seeks all that he wants in himself; the inferior man seeks all that he wants from others.

The higher type of man is firm but not quarrelsome; sociable, but not clannish.

The wise man does not esteem a person more highly because of what he says, neither does he undervalue what is said because of the person who says it.

The charm of *The Book of Poetry* is illustrated by the following translation by Mr. Cranmer-Byng:

### THE HAPPY MAN

He has perched in the valley with pines over-grown,  
This fellow so stout and so merry and free;  
He sleeps and he talks and he wanders alone,  
And none are so true to their pleasure as he.

He has builded his hut in the bend of the mound,  
This fellow so fine with his satisfied air;  
He wakes and he sings with no neighbour around,  
And whatever betide him his home will be there.

He dwells on a height amid cloudland and rain,  
 This fellow so grand whom the world blunders by ;  
 He slumbers alone, wakes, and slumbers again,  
 And his secrets are safe in that valley of Wei.

In China to-day hundreds of thousands of people know all the Confucian books by heart, and even the illiterate cherish the Confucian maxims first taught so many centuries ago.

## § 4

With Confucius we should consider the book of his slightly older contemporary, the philosopher Lao Tse, whose *Tao Te Ching* became the basis of Taoism, the other great Chinese religion. Lao Tse was born in 604 B.C. His religion was a doctrine of absolute non-resistance, a giving way which he felt made one part of nature. It was this religion which inspired the marvellous art and poetry of China for hundreds of years, and which still greatly influences the Chinese mind although it has—as a religion—almost ceased to exist except in a very debased form.

During his life Lao Tse taught this doctrine by a series of paradoxical aphorisms, and the legend is that when he finally decided to ride away into the western mountains to die, the keeper of the pass begged him to write down some of these sayings. Hence came the *Tao Te Ching*, the book of The Way, which is the nearest approach we can make to a translation of *Tao*. It consists of about eighty short chapters of sayings, many of them apparently self-contradictory :

“He who acts, destroys ; he who grasps, loses.”

“Wherever there is attachment there is bondage. When the bondage is released there is happiness. That is the essence of cultivating life.”

“Repose, inaction, tranquillity, stillness—these are the levels of the Universe, the ultimate perfection of *Tao*.”

“To the good I would be good ; to the not-good I would also be good in order to make them good.”

Thus is The Way shown. The book is a piece of pure wisdom-literature : there is no narrative, no connecting link between the various groups of sayings which constitute the chapters. During the 2500 years since it was written the *Tao Te Ching* has been translated into all civilised languages, and the revival during this century of our Western European interest in Chinese poetry and art has sent us back to this wonderful source of Far Eastern culture and spiritual ideas.



## § 5

## THE BOOK OF ZOROASTER

Another great Eastern religious teacher was Zoroaster. It is impossible to determine the exact age in which he lived. Some authorities place him as early as 1000 B.C., others contend that he was contemporary with Buddha or Confucius. He taught that in the beginning of things there were two spirits, one standing for light and life, the creator of law, order, and truth ; the other standing for darkness and death, the creator of all evil. The two spirits are engaged in eternal combat for the soul of man, and Zoroaster foretold the ultimate triumph of the good spirit. It is said that Zoroaster was the author of twenty books written on twelve thousand cow-hides. Much of his teaching is said to be contained in the Zend-Avesta, the sacred book of the Parsees. It is impossible to determine the exact date at which the present book was compiled, though it probably belongs to the period A.D. 250 to 600.

On the highest point of Malabar Hill, outside the city of Bombay, there are a number of towers, 25 feet in height, on which the Parsees leave the bodies of their dead that they may be eaten by vultures and so may not profane the earth. The religion of the Parsees forbids the burning or burial of the dead. The Parsees are a small people to-day, the only followers of the religion of Zoroaster, who, twelve hundred years ago, were driven out of Persia by the Arabs and settled in India. Centuries ago Zoroasterism had its hundreds of thousands of adherents living on the great plain bounded on the west by the River Tigris, on the east by the Indus, on the north by the Caspian Sea, and on the south by the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

One point of great interest about this book, the Zend-Avesta, is that no other existing document is written in the same language. The Zend-Avesta consists of five parts. The first part is made up of a liturgy of prayers and hymns ; the second part is also a liturgy ; the third part consists of legends and precepts ; the fourth part of songs and invocations ; and the fifth of prayers. The character of the Zend-Avesta is illustrated in the following extracts quoted from *The Teachings of Zoroaster*, by Dr. S. A. Kapadia :

With enemies fight with equity. With a friend proceed with the approval of friends. With a malicious man carry on no conflict, and do not molest him in any way whatever. With a greedy man thou shouldst not be a partner, and do not trust him with the leadership. With an ill-famed man form no connection. With an ignorant man thou shouldst not become a confederate and associate. With a foolish man make no dispute. With a drunken man do not walk on the road. From an ill-natured man take no loan. . . . In forming a store of good works thou shouldst be diligent, so that it may come to thy assistance among the spirits.

Thou shouldst not become presumptuous through any happiness of the world ; for the happiness of the world is such-like as a cloud that comes on a rainy day, which one does not ward off by any hill. . . .

Thou shouldst not become presumptuous through much treasure and wealth ; for in the end it is necessary for thee to leave all. . . .

Thou shouldst not become presumptuous through great connections and race ; for in the end thy trust is on thine own deeds.

Thou shouldst not become presumptuous through life ; for death comes upon thee at last, and the perishable part falls to the ground.

## § 6

### THE KORAN

Mohammed, one of the most remarkable men in the history of the world, was born in the year A.D. 570. After beginning life as a shepherd's boy, he became the servant of a rich widow, whom he married when he was twenty-five. Like John Bunyan and all other religious mystics, Mohammed began his religious experiences with grievous spiritual doubts and struggles. There were Christian churches in Syria in his days, and many colonies of Jews, and Mohammed must have contrasted their religions with the ignorant superstitions of his own people.

Dr. G. M. Grant has written a dramatic account of the beginning of Mohammed's mission :

"He used to wander about the hills alone, brooding over these things ; he shunned the society of men, and solitude became a passion to him. At length came the crisis. He was spending the sacred months at Mount Hira, 'a huge barren rock, torn by cleft and hollow ravine, standing out solitary in the full white glare of the desert sun, shadowless, flowerless, without well or rill.' Here, in a cave, Mohammed gave himself up to prayer and fasting. Long months or even years of doubt had increased his nervous excitability. He had had, they say, cataleptic fits during his childhood, and was evidently more delicately and finely constituted than those around him. These were the circumstances in which, according to the tradition of the cave, Mohammed heard a voice say 'Cry !'

" 'What shall I cry ?' he answered.

" 'Cry ! in the name of thy Lord who created.

Created man from blood,

Cry ! for thy Lord is the bountifullest,

Who taught the pen,

Taught man what he did not know.'

" Mohammed arose trembling and went to Khadijeh, and told her



what he had heard. She believed in him, soothed his terror, and bade him hope for the future. Yet he could not believe in himself. Was he not mad, or possessed by a devil? Were these voices of a truth from God?

"Doubting, wondering, hoping, he had fain put an end to a life which had become intolerable in its changings from the heaven of hope to the hell of despair, when again—some time, we know not how long, after—he heard the voice, 'Thou art the messenger of God, and I am Gabriel.' Then conviction at length seized hold upon him; he was indeed to bring a message of good tidings to the Arabs, the message of God through the angel Gabriel. He went back to Khadijeh, exhausted in mind and body. 'Wrap me, wrap me,' he said; and in that position the Word came to him:

"O thou who art covered, rise up and warn!

And thy Lord magnify!

And thy garments purify!

And abomination shun!

And grant not favours to gain increase!

And thy Lord await.'

"Thus it was that the first revelations came to Mohammed."

Mohammed was forty when he began to preach belief in the one true God, insisting on the doctrine of after-death rewards and punishments. Persecution was Mohammed's fate, as it has been the fate of most religious reformers, and to save his life he had to make a midnight flight from Mecca to Medina. This flight—the Hegira—is regarded by Mohammedans as one of the great events in the Prophet's life. An army of ten thousand men was sent from Mecca against him, but Mohammed dug a trench and built a wall, and his enemy was unable to prevail against him. This failure marked the beginning of a series of triumphs, and when he died at the age of sixty-two, Mohammed was master of all Arabia.

The contents of the Koran, the Mohammedan Bible, were first collected about the year A.D. 635, three years after the death of the prophet. Washington Irving tells us:

It was shortly after the victory of Khaled over Moseilma that Abu Bekar undertook to gather together from written and all sources the precepts and revelations of the Koran, which hitherto had existed partly in scattered documents and partly in the memories of the disciples and companions of the Prophet. He was greatly urged to this undertaking by Omar, that ardent zealot for the faith. The latter had observed with alarm the number of veteran companions of the Prophet who had fallen in the battle of Akreba. "In a little while," said he, "all the living testifiers to the faith, who bear the revelations of it in their memories, will have passed away, and with them so many records of the doctrines of Islam." He urged Abu Bekar, therefore, to collect from the surviving disciples all that they remembered; and to gather together from all quarters whatever parts of the Koran existed in writing.



It will be seen that the Koran was compiled very much in the same way as the New Testament. It not only inculcates a faith, but it is a textbook of civil law.

The unity of God is the basis of the Mohammedan faith, and it was this doctrine that the Prophet and his successors taught to "the Arabs, who worshipped the stars; to the Persians, who acknowledged Ormuz and Ahriman; the Indians, who worshipped idols; and the Turks, who had no particular worship." At the present time the number of people in the world to whom the Koran is the sacred book and Mohammed the supreme teacher is rather larger than the number of adherents of the Roman Catholic Church. About seventy million Mohammedans live in Pakistan, the newly created state of the Indian sub-continent.

The Koran teaches faith in God—"There is no God but Allah"—faith in His angels, faith in His Scriptures or Koran, faith in His Prophets, predestination, resurrection, and judgment after death. To the Moslem, Mohammed is the instrument "whereby the will of the creator of the world has been revealed." The Moslem absolutely believes in the verbal inspiration in the Koran. To him it is an infallible guide to conduct, and he neither questions its facts nor its precepts. Hell is elaborately described in the Koran. There are seven circles in hell. One of them is for wicked Mohammedans, who are released after a certain period of punishment. Another is for Jews, a third for Christians, and the worst hell of all for hypocrites. The heaven of the Koran is thus summarised by Sir Arthur Wollaston:

It is pictured as beautiful beyond the dreams of imagination, and all that can delight the heart or enchant the senses is there to be found—exquisite jewels and precious stones, the tree of happiness, yielding fruits of size and taste unknown to mortals, streams flowing, some with water, some with milk, some with wine (which, forbidden in this life, is permitted in the next), albeit without any intoxicating properties, and others with honey. But all these glories will be eclipsed by the resplendent houris of paradise; created not of clay, as in the case of mortal women, but of pure musk, and clad in magnificent garments, their charms being enhanced by the enjoyment of perpetual youth. Entertained with the ravishing songs of the Angel Israfil the inhabitants of paradise will enjoy pleasures that surpass all human imagination. Let it not be supposed, however, that the happiness of the blessed is to consist wholly in corporeal enjoyments; far otherwise, for all the varied pleasures of paradise will pale into insignificance compared with the exquisite delight of beholding the face of the Almighty morning and evening. The idea that women will not be admitted into paradise is a libel upon Islam, though admittedly differences of opinion exist as to whether or not they will pass into a separate place of happiness. Nor is it anywhere explained whether male companions will be assigned to them. One comfort, however, remains to the fair sex in that on entering paradise they are all to become young again.



The Koran teaches belief in the existence of genii as well as of angels. The character of these genii may be gathered from the stories of the *Arabian Nights*. It commands the faithful to pray five times a day at certain definite times. It commands the giving of alms, fasting ("the odour of the mouth of him who fasteth is more grateful to God than that of musk"), and a pilgrimage to Mecca. The Koran forbids the drinking of wine, gambling, usury, and the eating of certain kinds of flesh. The Koran allows polygamy and makes divorce easy. And it commands the faithful to proselytise, by persuasion and by the sword.

The word Koran means "that which ought to be read." It is divided into a hundred and fourteen chapters, each chapter being subdivided into verses. There are seven ancient editions of the Koran. Two were published at Medina, one at Mecca, one at Cufa, one at Basra, and one in Syria. The seventh is called the common or vulgar edition. Each edition is said to contain 77,639 words and 323,015 letters. Each chapter, except the ninth, is prefixed by the words: "In the name of the most merciful God." The Koran is written in prose in the purest Arabic, though Sale tells us that the sentences generally continued in a long-continued rhyme, for the sake of which the sense is often interrupted. There is little doubt that Mohammed himself was the actual author of the Koran. Mohammedans, however, believe that the first transcript has been from everlasting by God's throne, written on a table of vast bigness called the preserved table, in which are also recorded the divine decrees, past and future. A copy from this table, in one volume on paper, was by the ministry of the Angel Gabriel sent down to the lowest heaven, whence Gabriel revealed it to Mohammed by parcels, some at Mecca and some at Medina, at different times during the space of twenty-three years.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Koran was translated into Latin and French, and one of the French versions was translated into English in 1649. George Sale's famous English translation was first published in the year 1734.

The following quotations show the Koran's teaching concerning the nature of God:

To God belongeth the east and the west; therefore, whithersoever ye turn yourselves to pray, there is the face of God; for God is omnipresent and omniscient. To Him belongeth whatever is in heaven and on earth; all is possessed by Him, the Creator of heaven and earth; and when He decreeth a thing He only saith unto it, Be, and it is.

O true believers, beg assistance with patience and prayer, for God is with the patient.

God is bounteous and wise. He giveth wisdom unto whom He pleaseth; and he unto whom wisdom is given, hath received much good; but none will

consider, except the wise of heart. And whatever alms ye shall give, or whatever vow ye shall vow, verily God knoweth it ; but the ungodly shall have none to help them. If ye make your alms to appear, it is well ; but if ye conceal them, and give them unto the poor, this will be better for you, and will atone for your sins : and God is well informed of that which ye do.

Much of the Koran may be traced to the Bible, and although the Mohammedan has fought fiercely against the Christian, the Koran teaches that Jesus Christ, with Abraham and Moses, should be held in the highest reverence as an inspired prophet.

## § 7

## THE TALMUD

Other sacred books are the Granth of the Sikhs and the Talmud.

The importance of the Talmud lies in the fact that it is the authoritative guide of the great mass of the Jewish people living to-day in the various cities of the Western world. Professor Polano says : " The Talmud is a collection of early Biblical discussions, with the comments of generations of teachers, who devoted their lives to the study of the scriptures. It is an encyclopædia of law, civil and penal, human and divine. It is more, however, than a mere book of laws. It records the thoughts, rather than the events, of a thousand years of the national life of the Jewish people ; all their oral traditions, carefully gathered and preserved with a love devout in its trust and simplicity."

To the devout Jew there is an intimate connection between the ethical and ceremonial sides of religion, and this fact gives the Talmud its interest and importance.

The Talmud took over three hundred years to compile. The work was begun at the beginning of the fourth century A.D., and not finished until the end of the sixth. The Talmud is divided into two parts. The first part is called the Mishna and is a collection of legal decisions based on the laws of the Old Testament. The second part of the Talmud is called the Gemara. The Mishna was written in what Mr. Stanley Cook calls " a late literary form of Hebrew." The Gemara was written in Aramaic, the language in which a great part of our New Testament was originally written.

The following is a typical Talmudic parable :

It happened that the mayor of a city once sent his servant to the market to purchase some fish. When he reached the place of sale he found that all the fish save one had been sold, and this one a Jewish tailor was about purchasing. Said



the mayor's servant, "I will give one gold piece for it"; said the tailor, "I will give two." The mayor's messenger then expressed his willingness to pay three gold pieces for it, but the tailor claimed the fish, and said he would not lose it though he should be obliged to pay ten gold pieces for it. The mayor's servant then returned home and in anger related the circumstances to his master. The mayor sent for his subject, and when the latter appeared before him asked:

"What is thy occupation?"

"A tailor, sir," replied the man.

"Then how canst thou afford to pay so great a price for a fish, and how dare degrade my dignity by offering for it a larger sum than that offered by my servant?"

"I fast to-morrow," replied the tailor, "and I wished the fish to eat to-day, that I might have strength to do so. I would not have lost it even for ten pieces of gold."

"What is to-morrow more than any other day?" asked the mayor.

"Why art thou more than any other man?" returned the other.

"Because the king hath appointed me to this office."

"Well," replied the tailor, "the King of kings hath appointed this day to be holier than all other days, for on this day we hope that God will pardon our transgressions."

"If this be the case thou wert right," answered the mayor, and the Israelite departed in peace.

Thus, if a person's intention is to obey God, nothing can hinder its accomplishment. On this day God commanded His children to fast, but they must strengthen their bodies to obey Him by eating the day before. It is a person's duty to sanctify himself, bodily and spiritually, for the approach of this great day. He should be ready to enter at any moment into the Fearful Presence with repentance and good deeds as his companions.

## READING LIST

Prof. D. S. Margoliouth : *Mohammedanism*. Home University Library (Oxford University Press).

Mrs. Rhys Davids : *Buddhism*. Home University Library (Oxford University Press).

Sir R. K. Douglas : *Confucianism and Taoism* (S.P.C.K.).

E. T. C. Werner : *Myths and Legends of China* (Harrap).

Sister Nivedita and A. Coomaraswamy : *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists* (Harrap).

Dr. L. D. Barnett : *Hinduism*. Religions Ancient and Modern Series (Constable).

*Ramayana and Mahabharata*, condensed into English verse by Romesh Dutt (Everyman), gives a good working version of the two great Hindu classics.

*The Song of God : Bhagavad Gita.* Translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood with an introduction by Aldous Huxley.

John Murray publishes a very useful collection of volumes, The Wisdom of the East Series, among which may be particularly mentioned : Buddha's *The Way of Virtue*, a Translation of the Dhammapada, by W. D. C. Wagiswara and K. J. Saunders ; *Brahma-Knowledge : an Outline of the Philosophy of the Vedanta*, by L. D. Barnett ; *The Sayings of Confucius*, with notes by Lionel Giles ; *Taoist Teachings*, from the Book of Lieh Tzu, translated from the Chinese by Lionel Giles ; *The Teachings of Zoroaster* and *The Philosophy of the Parsi Religion*, by S. A. Kapadia.

*The Creative East*, in this series, by J. W. T. Mason, is an excellent general book.

*The Way of Acceptance*, by Hermon Ould (Dakers), gives a free rendering compiled from other translations of the *Tao Te Ching*.

The Oxford University Press publish an important series, The Sacred Books of the East, translations by various scholars, edited by the late Max Müller.

Frederick Warne & Co. publish English translations of the Koran and the Talmud. Both are also published in Everyman.

The historical background, a knowledge of which is indispensable to the understanding of the thought and literature concerned, may be viewed in Oscar Browning's *A Short History of the World* (Edward Arnold) ; and many valuable sidelights on early Eastern civilisations are shed by such Oxford University Press "Legacy" books as *The Legacy of India*, *The Legacy of Israel*, *The Legacy of Islam*.

*The Bible of the World*, by R. O. Ballou, is a well-planned selection from the world's sacred books, designed to exemplify the main religious systems (Routledge).

*Faiths that Moved the World* (Evans), by Horace Shipp, deals largely with the literature of Eastern religions.



## VI

### GREEK MYTH AND THE POETS

IN an earlier chapter something has been said about the place of the myth in the ancestry of literature. The nature of myths was explained. Why (it may be asked) return to the subject? It is necessary to return to it because mythology, like a parent's blood, has passed into all the veins of literature, of which it is still one of the sweetest and most persisting currents. What the alphabet is to words, and what words are to vocal or written expression of thought—such is mythology to poetry.

#### § I

We are more Greek than we know. Thousands of our most subtle and beautiful words are Greek. Thus no word of a high order is heard more frequently to-day than "psychological"; yet unless, at the back of the mind, one remembers that the word is compounded of the Greek *psyche* (the soul) and *logikos* (appertaining to speaking or reasoning), a true understanding of the word, which will avail one in all its uses and appearances, is not possible; any more than the word "philosophy" can be fully sensed unless one knows that it is simply the Greek *philo* (I love) joined to *sophia* (wisdom): hence, in its essence, the love of wisdom. Even the telephone is less wonderful to a man to whom it does not recall *tele* (far off) and *phone* (sound). This is not to tax the ordinary man with ignorance of Greek; if he does not know these things it is because the curricula of his schooldays did not include a simple and short study of Greek roots.

You read a leading article which discusses the reform of some system, and it demands *the cleansing of the Augean stable*. The phrase may have become so familiar in like connections that you vaguely understand that it refers to a summary turn-out of bad methods or corrupt officials; but its full significance is lost if one does not know that what is now a common phrase is an allusion to the Fifth Labour of Hercules, who, at the instigation of Juno, was compelled to undertake twelve colossal tasks, of which the fifth was to clean out the stables, or byres, of Augeas, king of Elis, where three thousand oxen had been untended for thirty years.

So deeply have these names and stories of the dawn of culture infused

themselves in our speech that even the least educated refer to them unknowingly. When the two weary Bath chairmen brought Mrs. Dowler from a party at three o'clock in the morning, they were unable to make anyone in Mr. Dowler's and Mr. Pickwick's lodgings hear their prolonged knockings. "'Servants in the arms o' Porpus, I think,' said the short chairman, warming his hands at the attendant link-boy's torch." This is true to life. The illiterate old chairman did not know that he was expressing his impatience by a perverted allusion to Morpheus the bringer of dreams, the son and servant of Somnus, the deity who presided over Sleep. Yet he referred to Morpheus as directly (and, indeed, as correctly) as does Milton in *Il Penseroso*, where he compares the "vain deluding Joys" of life to

. . . the gay motes that people the sun-beams,  
Or likest hovering dreams,  
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.

## § 2

## THE GREAT GOD PAN

In recent years the name of no Greek deity has been more on the lips than Pan. The beautiful statue of Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens is a tribute not only to Sir James Barrie's exquisite creation, but to that god of the woods and fields who inspired it. Pan, the son of Mercury and a wood-nymph, has a great place in poetry. His name signifies "all": hence a temple dedicated to all the gods was called a Pantheon, and a church in which honour is rendered to the famous dead, such as Westminster Abbey, is often called by the same name. Pan himself was a wild and wandering creature of the woods and mountains.

He was goat-footed and horned, flat-nosed and tailed, yet he played wild sweet tunes on his pipes; and thus he figures as a satyr who pursues the nymphs and dryads with unholy love—and also as the spirit of the joy of living the life of nature. Milton writes of

Universal Pan,  
Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance,  
Led on the eternal Spring.

But Pan was also the dread of all who wandered through a trackless forest or near a gloomy cave. Sudden and unreasonable fear would seize them at the thought of Pan's presence. Hence our word "panic." It is a singular thought that a panic on the Stock Exchange recalls the eerie terrors of darkness felt by Arcadian peasants in ages remoter than any of which history tells.



## § 3

## CUPID AND PSYCHE

The allusions to Greek myths, heard on the common tongue, are endless. Cupid's name is as familiar to-day as when the infant god of love was known to all men as the winged son of Venus by Jupiter, though other fathers—Mars and Mercury—are named. Cupid's name is also Eros; from the one we have our word "cupidity," and from the other "erotic." The story of the estrangement and reconciliation of Cupid and Psyche, one of the most beautiful of the myths, has been referred to in an earlier chapter. It may be regarded as a primitive allegory of the conditions under which men can find immortality.

Psyche's name signifies "a butterfly"—the emblem of the soul's life breaking from mortal bonds. Keats's beautiful "Ode to Psyche" will be recalled. It concludes thus:

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane  
 In some untrodden region of my mind,  
 Where branched thoughts, new-grown with pleasant pain,  
 Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind;  
 Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees  
 Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep;  
 And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,  
 The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep;  
 And in the midst of this wide quietness  
 A rosy sanctuary will I dress  
 With the wreath's trellis of a working brain,  
 With birds, and bells, and stars without a name;  
 With all the gardener's fancy e'er could feign,  
 Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same;  
 And there shall be for thee all soft delight  
 That shadowy thought can win,  
 A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,  
 To let the warm Love in!

The literature of Cupid is the literature of love. Shakespeare brings him into his plays no fewer than fifty-two times, never more beautifully than in *The Midsummer Night's Dream*. Oberon speaks to Puck:

That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,  
 Flying between the cold moon and the earth,  
 Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took  
 At a fair vestal thronèd by the west,  
 And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,  
 As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;

But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft  
 Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,  
 And the imperial votaress passed on,  
 In maiden meditation, fancy-free.  
 Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell :  
 It fell upon a little western flower,  
 Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound.  
 And maidens call it love-in-idleness.

No better example could be found of the transfusion of an ancient story into fine poetry thousands of years after that story was a wisp of fable in the morning of time.

The reason why these and countless other myths have survived till our day, aiding and beautifying expression, is not merely that poets and painters and scholars have loved them ; it is primarily their own everlastingness. They typify human experiences which do not, and cannot, change in essentials ; there is no need to go on inventing symbols which, being new, would have little of the beauty of these childlike fancies, and none of their immemorial suggestion. Myth binds the ages together. It may be described as the ozone of literature and art.

It is curious to note how instinctively we resort to fable when new things have to be named or new subjects discussed. In recent years, for example, man has acquired the power of mechanical flight. But his efforts to solve the problem have been beset with peril and tragedy. Hence we now constantly hear allusions to the story of Icarus, just as in an earlier period within our own memory similar allusions to Phaeton were frequent in books and newspapers.

## § 4

## THE ROAD TO RUIN

Phaeton's story has a tragic splendour, for its background is the universe itself. He was the son of Apollo (or Phœbus), the god of the Sun, and the nymph Clymene. He has represented the rash charioteer, or driver, in all ages. And so, when Shakespeare wishes to express Juliet's impatience for the dusk in which she hopes that Romeo will come to her, he makes her exclaim :

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,  
 Toward Phœbus' lodging : such a waggoner  
 As Phaethon would whip you to the west,  
 And bring in cloudy night immediately.



But, in the story, Phaeton brought much more than darkness on the earth. He begged Apollo to give him proof of his fatherly trust, and Apollo swore by Styx that he would deny him none that he asked. But he repented of his promise when Phaeton begged to be allowed to drive the chariot of the Sun for a single day. "None but myself," he said, "may drive the flaming car of day; not even Jupiter, whose terrible right arm hurls the thunderbolts." He warned his son of the cosmic perils of the journey. "The first part of the way is steep . . . the middle is high up in the heavens, whence I myself can scarcely, without alarm, look down and behold the earth I see stretched beneath me. . . . Add to all this, the heaven is all the time turning round and carrying the stars with it. I have to be perpetually on my guard lest that movement, which sweeps everything else along, should hurry me also away. Suppose I lend you the chariot, what will you do? . . . The road is through the midst of frightful monsters. You pass by the horns of the Bull, in front of the Archer, and near the Lion's jaws, and where the Scorpion stretches its arms in one direction and the Crab in another. Nor will you find it easy to guide these horses, with their breasts full of fire which they breathe forth from their mouths and nostrils." The foolhardy Phaeton held his father to his pledge, and was soon seated in the glorious chariot which Vulcan had made with axle and wheels of gold, spokes of silver, and a seat gemmed with diamonds and chrysolite. He took the reins and started on his journey over the earth. He was soon in difficulties. The steeds felt a lighter hand, and rushed headlong from the road. Disaster on disaster followed. The Great and Little Bear were scorched. Other constellations withered. When he neared the earth there was terror below and above. Phaeton had dropped the reins, and was on his knees praying to his father to help. But his prayer was lost in the great cry of dismay from the nations. Forests were aflame, mountains melted, the sea dried up, and mountains beneath it rose into islands. The earth was cracking: cities went up in smoke and fell in ashes. The Nile fled into the desert, where for the greater part of the year it remains to-day. The people of Ethiopia turned black. Neptune himself could not raise his head above the waves he ruled. Earth prayed in her agony to Jupiter to stay the conflagration that would reduce all her life to cinders.

Jupiter heard, and calling all the gods to witness the salvation he intended, hurled a lightning-bolt at the mad charioteer. He was unseated and fell headlong into the River Eridanus, whose nymphs buried him by its waters and raised a tomb to the rash demigod. His sisters mourned him so helplessly and long that Jupiter, in pity, changed them into poplars whose leaves dripped tears of amber on the fatal stream. His friend, Cygnus, wasted away, and him the gods transformed into a swan which for ever

haunted the place where Phaeton disappeared. Thus the primitive mind of man, so weak to explain, so quick to imagine, accounted for desert and drouth and the parched places of the world.

Briefer, but even more applicable now, is the story of Icarus, the son of Daedalus, the Athenian inventor, who had so offended King Minos of Crete that to save himself and his son he made wings for both so that they could fly to safety. Daedalus was skilful, and landed at Cumae, where he built a temple to Apollo. But Icarus flew so near the sun that the wax by which his wings were fastened melted and he fell into a part of the Ægean Sea, which was thenceforth named Icarian. Thus is it that in the twentieth century A.D. the end of Phaeton warns all drivers and that of Icarus all aviators, while both condemn a too soaring ambition such as any man may indulge to his hurt.

## § 5

## STORIES OF THE STARS

The permanence of the Greek myths is secured not only by their part in everyday speech and in literature, but by the fact that a great many of them are recorded in the sky above us, that is to say, in the changeless names of planets, stars, and constellations. God asked Job out of the whirlwind :

Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades ?  
Or loose the bands of Orion ?

On any starlight night you may see these constellations, the one "like a swarm of fireflies tangled in a silver braid," the other majestic, and, in the spring, "sloping slowly to the west." These are closely related in a myth. The Pleiades were daughters of Atlas, one of the thirteen Titans named by Hesiod, who in their assault on Olympus were cast by Jupiter into the most abysmal pit of Hades—Tartarus. The Pleiades were pursued by the giant, Orion, as they still are, in seeming, in the night sky of England. In answer to their prayer for succour Jupiter first turned them into pigeons, then into stars. Of these only six can be seen with the eye, and the story is that the seventh, Electra, quitted her place that she might not see the ruin of Troy which her son, by Jupiter himself, had founded. Hence Byron's line, "Like the lost Pleiad, seen no more below." Milton, recalling the passage in Job, and describing the creation of the firmament and all the heavenly bodies, tells how—

The grey  
Dawn and the Pleiades before Him danced,  
Shedding sweet influence.



Orion, the belted hunter, who still threatens the daughters of Atlas, was a son of Neptune. The great goddess Diana (or Artemis) learned to love Orion while he joined her in the chase. She is said to have shot him with an arrow, when his head, just appearing above the sea, was guilefully pointed out to her by Apollo as a target on which to test her skill ! When she knew what she had done, she sorrowfully set him in the skies.

It often happens that a sequence of stories is recalled by constellations that are near to each other in the heavens. Everyone can pick out the Cassiopea group, in form like an irregular capital W. Cassiopea was the wife of Cepheus, king of Ethiopia. She imprudently proclaimed that she was more beautiful than any of the fifty sea-nymphs, the Nereides, who in their wrath begged Neptune to avenge them. The sea-god sent a terrible monster to ravage the coast, whereupon the Ethiopians sought help from the oracle of Jupiter Ammon in the Libyan desert, and were told that the gods would be appeased if Cepheus exposed his daughter, Andromeda, to the monster. Heart-broken by this demand, Cepheus at last allowed his beloved child to be chained to a rock washed by the sea. Here she was found by Perseus, who, in his winged wanderings, had already slain the terrible Medusa, or Gorgon, on whose serpent locks none could look without turning into stone. He arrived just as the monster was clearing the waves to devour his lovely prey, and, flying down on its back, plunged his sword between its scales and thus destroyed the destroyer. Another version is that he showed the Gorgon's head to the monster, which changed slowly into a rock and, as such, remained for ever to mark the scene. Perseus married Andromeda, and the constellations that bear their names now repeat the story—as do those of Cepheus and Cassiopea. Many minor deities or heroes or persecuted nymphs were thus removed from earth to sky.

The story of Ariadne is different. Deserted by Theseus on an island which was the haunt of Bacchus, she was found there by the wine-god as he was returning with all his train from a hunt. The story has been told best by Catullus in poetry, and by Titian in his masterpiece, "Bacchus and Ariadne," in the National Gallery.

Bounding along is blooming Bacchus seen,  
With all his heart aflame with love of thee,  
Ariadne ! and behind him, see,  
Where Satyrs and Sileni whirl along,  
With frenzy fired, a fierce tumultuous throng.

These lines of Catullus (translated by Sir Theodore Martin) may well have inspired Titian, whose picture answers to them perfectly. Ariadne became the grateful wife of Bacchus, who gave her a crown of seven stars which, after her death, he threw into the sky to form a constellation.

## § 6

## ECHO AND NARCISSUS

Many of these flowers of myth are perpetuated by flower-names, none more beautifully than the myth of Echo and Narcissus. Echo, the beautiful Oread (nymph of the mountains) annoyed Diana by her ceaseless chatter.

Diana pronounced on her this sentence of punishment: "You shall forfeit the use of that tongue with which you have cheated me, except for that one purpose you are so fond of—*reply*. You shall still have the last word, but no power to speak first." This limitation of her speech greatly troubled her when she wished to attract the love of the beautiful youth Narcissus, who, being a confirmed bachelor, repelled her advances as he had those of many other nymphs. Echo, in her shame and chagrin, sought the rocks and mountains, where her form wasted away until only her voice remained. And by that alone we know her still. But she was soon avenged. Refusing to love any maiden, Narcissus fell in love with his own image in a pool. Unable to embrace it, he pined and died of grief. The repentant nymphs would have given him burial, but when they looked for his young body they found only the flower which bears his name. The story has been touched on by many poets—by Milton in "*Comus*," by Chaucer, Spenser, and Goldsmith; and by Cowper in his epigram "*On an Ugly Fellow*":

Beware, my friend, of crystal brook  
Or fountain, lest that hideous hook,  
Thy nose, thou chance to see;  
Narcissus' fate would then be thine,  
And self-detested thou would'st pine,  
As, self-enamoured, he.

It is clear, then, that the old Greek myths are no esoteric study. So far from being "highbrow" (detestable word!), they are elemental to our language and literature. Men of distinguished birth or origin are prone to assert themselves, and it should not be forgotten that a word or a phrase is equally enhanced by length of history and storage of suggestion. One might refer to hundreds in which a Greek myth is enclosed: such as "Scylla and Charybdis," "rich as Cræsus," "Cerberus," "vulcanite," "amazons," the "heel of Achilles," the "Daily Argus," the "lethal chamber," "sibyl," "nemesis," "Europe," "Titanic," "mentor," "stentorphone," "Nestor," "Pandora's box," "Champs Élysées," "Æolian Hall," "Gordian knot," and many more; but space forbids. For any broad understanding of Greek mythology the reader must be referred to the



bibliography appended to this chapter. In several of the books named he will learn the lie of the enchanted land.

## § 7

## IN THE BEGINNING

Our Bible opens with the simple and sublime statement, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Greek myth is much more confused, but it is as deeply concerned with the beginning of all things, and with the answer to man's eternal question, "Whence?" The most widely accepted story was that of Hesiod, who believed that some great Power impressed itself on Chaos and out of nothing brought forth all things. The first ministers of this Power were Uranus, the most ancient of all the gods, and Gæa, or Ge, from whose name, as the name of the earth, we derive our words geology, geography, geometrical, and so forth. From this marriage between Heaven and Earth came the portentous progeny of the Titans, who typified the most tremendous forces of nature, and the three one-eyed Cyclopes, who were fabled to have become the servants of Vulcan and the makers, afterwards, of Jove's thunderbolts. But the most formidable of all the sons of Uranus was Cronus (Time), otherwise Saturn, who, by his sister Rhea, became the father of Zeus (Jupiter), Aides (Pluto), Poseidon (Neptune), and of three daughters, Vesta, Demeter (Ceres), and Hera (Juno).

Uranus feared his offspring and plunged those he feared most into Tartarus. But Saturn rebelled, and after slaying his father with an iron sickle reigned in his stead over heaven and earth. He, in turn, also feared his children, and is fabled to have swallowed each as it was born. This may symbolise the truth that Time swallows all things, or it may have an even deeper meaning.

The story goes that when Rhea had borne her sixth and last child, Jupiter, or Zeus, she saved him by the ruse of wrapping a baby-shaped stone in baby-clothes, which Saturn unthinkingly swallowed.

Meanwhile, Jupiter was hidden in a cave of Mount Ida, where he was suckled by the goat Amalthea and guarded by tenderly vigilant nymphs. When he had grown adult, he learned of his mother's and his own wrongs and, by means which have no relation to physiology, compelled his father to disgorge his brothers and sisters. Together they defeated Saturn, whose throne Jupiter seized. He divided his universal kingdom with his two brothers, Neptune, who was given the ocean, and Pluto, who was monarch of the dead. Jupiter remained supreme in heaven and on earth. He took

his beautiful sister, Juno (the Greeks called her Hera) to wife, by whom, and by others, he begat many of the greater gods and goddesses.

But, first, Jupiter had to fight for his throne on Mount Olympus, which was assailed by the Titans, who, in their cosmic fury, piled Mount Pelion on Mount Ossa to effect their purpose. In his magnificent unfinished poem "Hyperion," Keats makes this Titan the leader in this assault on heaven.

Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall?  
Am I to leave this haven of my rest,  
This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,  
This calm luxuriance of blissful light,  
These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,  
Of all my lucent empire?

Fall!—No, by Tellus and her briny robes!  
I will advance a terrible right arm  
Shall scare that infant thunderer, rebel Jove,  
And bid old Saturn take his throne again.

This stupendous war for the control of all things is described by Hesiod in terms which make the brain reel—though whether, in the advance of destructive science, it will do so much longer is a solemn question.

Vast Olympus reel'd throughout,  
Down to its rooted base, beneath the rush  
Of those immortals: the vast chasm of hell  
Was shaken with the trembling . . .

No longer then did Jove  
Curb down his force; but sudden in his soul  
There grew dilated strength, and it was fill'd  
With his omnipotence; his whole of might  
Brake from him, and the godhead rush'd abroad . . .  
Thrown from his nervous grasp the lightnings flew  
Reiterated, swift; the whirling flash  
Cast sacred splendour, and the thunderbolt  
Fell.

And the Titans fell. They were enchained in Tartarus, "so far beneath this earth as earth is distant from the sky."

## § 8

### THE OLYMPIANS

Jove now reigned secure and the great Olympian household was formed. Its chief members were:



JUPITER (or Zeus), the Thunderer, the supreme god, whose altars on earth surpassed all others. He is represented as throned, with a thunderbolt in his hand, and wearing a breastplate whose name, "ægis," is an English word to-day. His emblem, the eagle, was always represented in his statues. Hence, in *Cymbeline*, the soothsayer says :

Last night the very gods show'd me a vision :

I saw Jove's bird, the Roman eagle, wing'd  
From the spungy south to this part of the west,  
There vanish'd in the sunbeams : which portends,  
Unless my sins abuse my divination,  
Success to the Roman host.

JUNO (or Hera), his wife, who bore Mars (or Ares), Vulcan (or Haephestos), and Hebe. She was queen of heaven. Among her emblems were the peacock and the cuckoo. She distrusted her husband, and loved Greece.

MARS, the god of war.

VULCAN (or Hephaestus), the god of fire, and the armourer of the gods.

HEBE, the blooming daughter of Jupiter and Juno, who was the cup-bearer to the gods in the Olympian halls and was so beautiful that she was regarded, also, as the goddess of youth. Thus it is that her name is often lightly used to-day as a synonym for "barmaid" ; but thus, also, is it one of the names with which poets gem their most beautiful lines. What does Keats say ?

Let, then, winged Fancy find  
Thee a mistress to her mind . . .  
With a waist and with a side  
White as Hebe's, when her zone  
Slipt its golden clasp, and down  
Fell her kirtle to her feet,  
While she held the goblet sweet,  
And Jove grew languid.

APOLLO (or Phœbus), the god of the Sun, and patron of music and poetry, of whom Shelley sings :

I am the eye with which the Universe  
Beholds itself and knows itself divine ;  
All harmony of instrument or verse,  
All prophecy, all medicine are mine,  
All light of art or nature ; to my song,  
Victory and praise in their own right belong.

The glorious statue of Apollo Belvedere, in the Vatican, represents him shooting his arrow at the terrible serpent Python, which he slew. Byron describes his pose in "Childe Harold":

The lord of the unerring bow,  
The god of life, and poetry, and light,  
The Sun, in human limbs arrayed, and brow  
All radiant from his triumph in the fight.  
The shaft has just been shot; the arrow bright  
With an immortal's vengeance; in his eye  
And nostril, beautiful disdain, and might  
And majesty flash their full lightnings by,  
Developing in that one glance the Deity.

DIANA (or Artemis), the goddess of hunting, daughter of Latona, by Jupiter, and twin sister of Apollo—therefore associated with the moon. She is often identified with Silene. Although she was the patroness of chastity, she descended to woo Endymion, the youthful shepherd, on Mount Latmos, whose name gives the title to Keats's earliest long poem and to the last of Disraeli's novels. Few names are more frequent in poetry than those of Diana and Endymion.

VENUS (or Aphrodite), goddess of love and beauty, daughter of Jupiter and Dione, but more beautifully fabled to have risen from the foam of the sea. Her name and attributes have passed into all literature.

MERCURY (or Hermes), the young and graceful messenger of the gods, was the son of Jupiter and Maia, the most beautiful of the seven Pleiades. The name Hermes is interpreted as the "hastener." One of Mercury's chief tasks was to conduct the souls of the dead to the banks of the dreadful river Styx, which flowed nine times round Hades. As a swift messenger he wore a *petasus*, a winged hat, and bore in his hand the *caduceus*, a wand of gold twined with serpents and also winged. He was the god of eloquence, and the patron of commerce, even of gambling and thieving, and of all occupations which required craft or cunning. He is said to have made the first lyre out of a tortoise-shell, and to have presented it to Apollo in exchange for the *caduceus*. His manly beauty is referred to in Hamlet's impassioned speech to his mother as he bade her look at his father's portrait:

A station like the herald Mercury,  
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill.

VESTA (or Hestia), daughter of Cronus and Rhea, was the goddess of all public and private hearths. She remained single. The Romans especially honoured her, and in her temple her sacred fire was tended by six virgin priestesses, who were severely punished if they allowed it to expire. In that event it was rekindled from the heat of the sun.



MINERVA (Athene, or Pallas Athene), goddess of wisdom, was in some respects the greatest of the goddesses. She was the daughter of Jupiter and Metis. When Metis predicted to Jupiter that one of his children would supplant him, he endeavoured to make this impossible, so the myth tells us, by devouring his wife. Then, being tortured by pains in his head, he ordered Vulcan to cleave it open with an axe. From his exposed brain Minerva leaped forth fully grown and armed with spear and shield. The event shook Olympus, and Apollo stayed his chariot to contemplate the wonder. The goddess immediately took her place in the Olympian assembly. She remained a virgin, and was the most loved child of Jupiter as having proceeded from himself. She had many powers and functions, but was worshipped in Athens as the goddess of wisdom. Her colossal statue in ivory and gold, by Phidias, surmounted the Parthenon and looked down on the city of which she was protectress. She had won the city as a prize in a competition with Neptune to determine which of them could make the most valuable gift to men. Neptune smote the ground with his trident, and from the ground a horse issued ; but Minerva produced the olive, which the gods judged to be the more useful, and her reward was Athens, "the eye of Greece, mother of arts and eloquence." The olive-tree was deemed sacred to her.

Minerva is represented with the shield given her by Jupiter, in whose centre was Medusa, upon whose face all who dared to look were turned into stone. Milton puts into the mouth of the Elder Brother in "Comus" the question :

What was that snaky-headed Gorgon-shield  
That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,  
Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,  
But rigid looks of chaste austerity,  
And noble grace that dashed brute violence  
With sudden adoration and blank awe !

These were pre-eminently the deities of heaven.

NEPTUNE (or Poseidon) ruled the sea and all the waters of earth. He wielded the trident, the symbol of naval power to-day. He ruled all the lesser divinities of the waters—Triton, his son by Amphitrite, Proteus, the Sirens, and the Sea-nymphs—Oceanides and Nereids. Shakespeare has many references to Neptune.

## § 9

### THE RAPE OF PROSERPINE

Pluto reigned in Hades, the infernal world whose dread rivers of Styx, Acheron, Lethe, Cocytus, and Phlegethon traversed the realm of darkness

in the midst of which he sat on his sulphur throne. No temples were raised to the lord of death. No goddess could be induced to be his spouse. Hence arose one of the most beautiful and significant stories in all Greek myth. Demeter (or Ceres), goddess of corn and harvests, from whose Roman name we have our word "cereal," wandered with her daughter Persephone, whose name is also Proserpine, in the flowery plain of Enna, in Sicily. The mother, goddess of the Earth, was a daughter of Saturn and Rhea; their marriage had united Earth to Heaven. Her child, to whom Zeus himself was father, was to unite Earth to Hades.

Proserpine, as the Romans called her, was gathering flowers with her young companions near Enna, when suddenly Pluto appeared in his chariot, loved her at sight, and instantly seized her to be his consort in his silent realm. Proserpine dropped the flowers from her apron and cried aloud to her attendant nymphs, but the ravishing god urged forward his steeds until they were checked by the river Cyane. There Pluto, in a frenzy of passion, smote the ground with his sceptre; it opened, and gave him passage down to Erebus. The young girl-goddess, torn from the sunlight and the happy earth, had become the bride of the god of death.

Ceres sought her child in a frenzy of grief. She lit two torches at the fires of Mount Etna that she might search the world through the night. Neither gods nor men could, or dared, tell her of Proserpine's fate. Nine days she wandered, and at last, returning to Sicily, she learned the truth from Arethusa, who had just passed through the nether world in her chaste flight from Alpheus. "There," she said, "I saw your Proserpine. She was sad, but no longer was there terror in her eyes. Her look was such as became the queen of the realms of the dead."

Drawn in her chariot by two dragons, Ceres flew to the abode of the gods, where she awed even Jove by her storm of prayers:

So mighty was the mother's childless cry,  
A cry that rang thro' Hades, Earth, and Heaven.

Yielding to her, Jove sent Mercury to demand Proserpine of Pluto, but made it a condition of her release that she should not have tasted food in the lower world. When he arrived and Pluto was about to yield, it appeared that Proserpine, walking in the Elysian fields, had sucked the pulp of a pomegranate. This forbade her surrender, but as a compromise it was decreed that she should evermore spend two-thirds of the year with her mother on the earth, and the rest with her husband below it.

Ceres waited with far-off gaze for her coming, and the meeting of mother



and daughter has been the theme of poets from Ovid to Tennyson. It is our own poet who describes their meeting :

A sudden nightingale  
Saw thee, and flash'd into a frolic of song  
And welcome ; and a gleam as of the moon,  
When first she peers along the tremulous deep,  
Fled wavering o'er thy face, and chased away  
That shadow of a likeness to the King  
Of shadows, thy dark mate. Persephone !  
Queen of the dead no more—my child ! Thine eyes  
Again were human-godlike, and the Sun  
Burst from a swimming fleece of winter gray,  
And robed thee in his day from head to feet—  
“ *Mother !* ” and I was folded in thine arms.

This is the deathless story. It has but one meaning. Proserpine signifies the seed-corn, which through the winter lies darkly hidden in the soil, and her yearly return is the symbol of the spring.

So in the pleasant vale we stand again,  
The field of Enna, now once more ablaze  
With flowers that brighten as thy footstep falls.

Nothing that man knows is so interesting to him, or so fraught with the mystery which enlarges without weighing him down, as the change of the seasons. Still, in his poetry and imagination, Ceres and Proserpine walk together hand-in-hand, and once more they lead us, through the lights of spring, to the pomp which is roses, and the wealth which is corn, and the sweetness which is honey in the honeycomb.

Such, in meagre outline, is that world of myth which shimmers for ever behind “ the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome.” Much of it is crude, or even repellent, but what is beautiful and what is forbidding belongs alike to the childhood of man. Ruskin says : “ To the mean person the myth means little ; to the noble person much.” The poet, the artist, and the dreamer will return to these stories so long as men feel the burden and the mystery of life, and are fain to lose them in “ the light that never was on sea or land.”

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## VII

### GREECE AND ROME

#### § I

**B**EFORE proceeding to consider the achievements of the great Greek poets, it is necessary to say something of the Greek spirit, that particular national genius which enabled a small people in the fifth century before Christ to produce a literature of unparalleled grandeur and dignity, to rise to a splendid height of excellence in architecture and sculpture, and to lay the foundations of mathematics, physical science, and philosophy. It has been well said that "with the exception of Christianity, the Greeks were the beginners of nearly everything of which the modern world can boast."

The Greeks had great limitations. They knew nothing about the past. At the best they only guessed. They knew no geography. They knew next to nothing about other peoples. On the other hand, they had one great asset, a beautiful language, particularly fitted, in its power and precision, for the immortal expression of beautiful thoughts. The Greeks themselves were highly civilised, but they were only separated from barbarism by a very thin interval. They were our dawn, but a dawn that came, so far as we know, without preparation or warning. The Greeks were a young people living in the cold clear air of the early morning. There is a strong contrast between the Greeks and the Hebrews. To the Hebrew, the sorrow of the world was due to disobedience to the laws of the one all-powerful God. The Greeks had no idea of a single God, beneficent in intention, directing the affairs of men. They had many gods, constantly warring with each other, only intermittently concerned with human affairs, all of them actuated by human passions, and mainly concerned with their own adventures.

But behind the gods was Fate, determining the destiny alike of men and gods, and against Fate it was useless to contend. That is the prevailing note of Greek tragedy. It brought with it a great sense of dignity. Self-respect demanded that men should accept the decrees of Fate without protest, without pretence that things were other than they were, and without yearnings for the unattainable. Self-respect, too, compelled man to eschew evil and follow good without any thought of the gods or their desires.

The Greeks were never mystics, they were realists. It has been well said that to Homer a wave was "nothing else than salt water." The Greek was concerned with life on earth, not with the after life of which he claimed to know nothing; though the myths spoke vaguely of the Elysian Fields and of the dread Underworld where Pluto reigned, and Socrates in his noble final speech indicated some hope of immortality. The worship of humanity became the dominating feature of Greek life and Greek religion. This worship brought with it the love for everything that makes human life fine. The first of these things was beauty. The idols of India and Egypt are hideous and repulsive, signifying terror and power. But the Greeks could worship only beautiful gods, and their statues enshrine the dreams and ideals of the worshippers. With beauty the Greeks loved justice, freedom, and truth—all necessary for the happiness of man.

Perhaps because of the absence of traditions and established conventions, the Greeks were never sentimental. And because they were realists they loved the simple and the unadorned. Greek poetry never has the elaborate ornamentation to be found in such a poem as *Paradise Lost*. It is austere. In their literature, as in their sculpture, the Greeks achieved the beauty of simple directness—of sheer truth.

Three facts should be particularly borne in mind. The Greeks were a small people living in a number of city-states, each with a few thousand inhabitants, and all of them on the sea. Athens was the most remarkable and most interesting of these states, and by far the greater part of the Greek literature that has come down to us was produced in one small city, far less in area and with a far smaller population than a London suburb. The second fact is that certainly eighty per cent. of Greek literature has been lost. All that exists was preserved in Alexandria. The third fact is that the wars waged by the Greeks against the Persians occasioned the birth of European patriotism. The fear of the barbarian not only stimulated love of country, but also caused the Greeks to regard themselves as the guardians of culture against barbarian destruction.

The Greek spirit means the love of unadorned beauty, simplicity, truth, freedom, and justice, the dislike of exaggeration, sentimentality, and elaboration.

The old-world stories summarised in the preceding chapter are the substance of Greek romantic literature. Evolved in the dawn of European life, sung by wandering bards, repeated and elaborated from generation to generation, they were first, as has already been related, written out in Hesiod and Homer. In these same stories the great Greek dramatists found the plots of their plays.

It is remarkable in how few years the great Athenian drama was produced. Æschylus gained his first prize in 484 B.C., and the *Medea* of



Euripides, the crowning achievement of his career, was produced in 431 B.C. Fifty-three years was sufficient for the complete development of what has been described as "the greatest work of art the world has ever witnessed." A similar remarkable development characterised the drama in Elizabethan England. All the plays of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Webster, and Heywood were written in thirty-eight years !

## § 2

Like the beginnings of mediæval drama in England, those of early Greek drama were religious. They grew out of the ritual dance performed in the springtime before the shrines of Dionysus, the Bacchus of the Romans, and the intimate connection with the god of vineyards and fruitfulness remained unimpaired in the great days of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The front row of the seats in the theatre in Athens was reserved for the priests, the Priest of Dionysus occupying a specially carved arm-chair in the middle. All citizens were expected to attend, and in the days of Pericles, at the height of the power and glory of Athens, the price of their seats was given them by the State. The Athens theatre held 30,000 people. Everyone went to the theatre. It was a national duty.

All the plays performed were the result of competitions held by the Government, which was also what we should call the Church, and the companies which acted them were paid for by wealthy men. If you wished to compete—and there could only be three competitors each year—you had first to be given a chorus, that is to say, some wealthy man would pay for a company which would act the play you were going to write. Because the idea of failure would have been ill-omened in what was a religious ceremony, everybody received a prize in the competition.

The practice of the theatre developed as the great tragic period represented by the three authors named above took its course. At the beginning all the action took place in the circular space of the orchestra, and the "scene," as it was called, was not a stage, but merely a tent in which the actors changed their clothes, and which could be used, as the similar curtains at the back of an Elizabethan theatre were used, to represent a door or a gateway or whatever veiled the action from the spectators, because in Greek drama, unlike in our modern plays, everything in the nature of what we should call incident took place "off." In the plays of Æschylus the characters in the chorus occupied this orchestral space, and for that



reason, as well as because the chorus was the element from which tragedy as a whole sprang, the chorus had a prominent part in the action of the play. As theatrical technique developed the scene became a slightly raised platform at the back of the orchestra from which the speeches of the actors were generally delivered, the chorus remaining in the orchestra below and tending, therefore, as in most of the plays of Euripides, to become rather a means of commentary on the action than part of it.

The relaxation from tragic tension which in Shakespeare is got for the most part by comic relief was provided in Greek plays by the choral odes and dances. Compare, for instance, *Macbeth* with the *Hippolytus* of Euripides. In *Macbeth*, unusually for Shakespeare, Duncan is killed in the Greek manner "off" the stage. *Macbeth*, in fact, in the earliest scenes and in its emotional context represents more closely than any other of Shakespeare's plays the Greek way of handling a subject. The tension which the audience must feel as a distracted dialogue between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, when the murder is done, is relieved by the knocking at the gate and the comic scene of the porter. In *Hippolytus*, on the other hand, when Phædra goes off the stage to hang herself, the relief from the tension is not got through any comic relief, which would have been foreign to the whole Greek mode of thinking in drama, but by the ritual dance and the song of the chorus which take the mind of the audience straight away from the tragic reality to the realms of romance.

The actors, like Japanese actors to-day, wore large masks which had probably something of the effect of a megaphone and enabled their voices to be heard clearly at the back of the immense theatre in the open air. They wore buskins, large boots with soles almost like stilts, which gave them an appearance of more than human height, and because of this dress and because of the fact that the story was told by dialogue rather than by obvious action they moved hardly at all across the stage. Below, in the orchestra, grouped round the altar of Dionysus in the middle, was the chorus, motionless while the actors were speaking, and, when their time came, chanting their odes to the rhythmic movements of a dance in which every part of the body had its share, and chanting them not altogether, but in two divisions, so that the verse sung by one half would be answered by a following verse sung by the other. In the telling of the story certain conventions were generally observed. There was usually a prologue explaining the circumstances before the action began. The crisis, as we have said, almost always took place "off," and was always narrated to the audience by a messenger, whose speech generally is the culmination of a play. The play ended, at any rate in the developed technique of Euripides, though not so generally in the two preceding dramatists, with



the appearance of some god who summed up in a few words of comfort or reconciliation the tragic passion of the drama and sent the spectators away with a sense of peace.

## § 3

There is a striking resemblance, both in the novelty of their achievement and the circumstances of their lives, between the writers of the wonder century of Greece—the fifth century B.C.—and the English writers of the Elizabethan era, like Spenser and Raleigh. Æschylus, the eldest of the three great Greek dramatists, was a soldier. He was born in 525 B.C., and he fought in the Athenian army that defeated the Persians at the famous battle of Marathon. This decisive victory of a small people over a mighty empire had an immense effect on the character of Æschylus and of his work. His plays were written in an heroic age when men were stimulated by unexpected and almost un hoped for national success, just as the Elizabethans were stimulated by the defeat of the Spanish Armada.

The first play of Æschylus was produced when he was twenty-six, in the first year, that is, of the wonder century—the fifth B.C. Like Shakespeare, he acted in his own dramas, and though only seven of them are extant, he is supposed to have written ninety. There is a legend that he was killed by an eagle dropping a tortoise (the shell of which the bird had been unable to break) on his bald head, which it mistook for a rock.

Religious fervour joined in Æschylus with pride of country and race, the result of the glory of Marathon. His birthplace was Eleusis, the home of those religious mysteries the nature of which the modern world knows very little. As a boy he must have seen scores of pilgrims troubled in spirit, seeking explanation of life's problems or maybe release from trouble, and he grew up obsessed with the conviction of the impossibility of escape from the fates and furies that pursue the steps of men.

For the plots of his plays he went to the ancient stories of his people. He himself said that his tragedies were "morsels from the banquet of Homer."

What are the qualities of Æschylus that have given his plays immortality and that cause them to be read with eager interest and enjoyment two thousand four hundred years after they were written? Perhaps their character can best be explained by comparing Æschylus to an Elizabethan, Marlowe, and a modern, Victor Hugo. Like Marlowe, Æschylus was, to use Swinburne's phrase, "a daring and inspired pioneer." In his music there is no echo of any man's before him. Read Marlowe's *History of Dr. Faustus* and you are in touch with the qualities of Æschylus—the horror,



the tremendous power, the excited passion. Aristophanes, the Athenian writer of comedies, denounced Æschylus as "bombastic," and it is interesting to note that this is the adjective frequently applied by critics to Victor Hugo, who, in a less degree than Marlowe, possessed some of the characteristics of the Greek poet.

There is never any love-interest in the Æschylus plays. He was interested in elemental forces, and he gave Fate and Fear, Justice and Injustice the same individual personality as Bunyan gave to similar qualities in his *Pilgrim's Progress*. In his dramas, as J. A. Symonds said, "mountains were made to speak." So tremendous was the power of Æschylus, that the Greeks believed that he must have written under the immediate inspiration of the gods. One story says that, when he was a boy, he was sent to watch the clusters of grapes in a vineyard, and fell asleep. While he slept the god Dionysus came to him and ordered him to write tragedies. When he awoke he made his first attempt and succeeded at once. Sophocles said of his great rival: "He did what he ought to do, but did it without knowing." Certain of his contemporaries asserted that he wrote his tragedies while drunk with wine. The fact seems to have been that his originality and genius were so astounding that his fellows were forced to find some super-human explanation for them.

Of the seven plays of Æschylus that have been preserved *Prometheus Bound* is perhaps the most interesting for us from the fact of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. It was the second of a trilogy of plays, the first of which was called *Prometheus the Fire-Bearer*, and the third *Prometheus Unbound*. Both of these have been lost, although a portion of the third translated into Latin by Cicero remains to us. A summary of the play may give some idea of the mind and manner of the dramatists.

At the beginning of the drama, Prometheus, who has offended Zeus, is chained to a rock by Hephæstus, the god who corresponds to the Latin Vulcan. Zeus has recently established his dynasty in Heaven and has determined to destroy the human race and to populate the earth with a finer creation. Prometheus is the typical benefactor of mankind. He has prevented the god's proposed destruction by giving man the gift of fire, the most ancient of all arts, and subsequently teaching him carpentry, husbandry, medicine, and seamanship. And for this rebellion Zeus has decreed his dreadful punishment. While he is being bound Prometheus remains proudly silent, but when Hephæstus has left him he cries out to the Earth and the Sun to see how he, a god, is wronged by other gods:

You see me prisoned here, a god ill-starred,  
Of Zeus the enemy, hated of all  
That tread the courts of his omnipotence,  
Because of mine exceeding love for men.



He is visited by the ocean nymphs, and to them he emphasises his services to mankind :

'Twas I that first to yoke and collar tamed  
The servant steer, and to relieve mankind  
From Labours manifold, the docile steed  
I drew beneath the well-appointed car,  
Proud instrument of wealthy mortals' pride.  
And none save I found for the mariner  
His wave-o'er-wandering chariot, canvas-winged.  
I, that devised thus gloriously for men,  
Myself have no device to rid my soul  
Of her sore burden !

One satisfaction is left to Prometheus. He knows, and he alone, that a dire fate awaits Zeus himself—"It shall hurl him down from power supreme to nothing." His prophecy is repeated to the god, who sends Hermes to Prometheus to demand details of the threatened danger. He refuses to speak. Hermes reminds him of the punishment which has already followed rebellion, and he replies :

I would not change it for thy servitude.  
Better to grieve than be a lackeying slave.

Further punishment promptly follows. An eagle is sent to gnaw at his flesh ; the earth opens, and the rock to which Prometheus is chained sinks into the abyss.

There has been considerable discussion as to the religious meaning that Æschylus attached to his story, and it is suggested that in the third of the plays, one of the two that are lost, Prometheus and Zeus are reconciled. The moral of the trilogy is that the gods "learned the stern spirit of the law, but tempered the disposition with their natural sympathy for humanity. So arose the new order, the rule of reasonable law."

Apart from Prometheus, the most interesting character that Æschylus created was Clytemnestra in the mighty drama *Agamemnon*. Clytemnestra has been compared to Lady Macbeth, but she is really made of harder metal, ready, as J. A. Symonds says, to "browbeat truth before the judgment-seat of gods or men." When she has killed Agamemnon there is no weakening, no regret. She is the minister of Fate, the minister of Justice, the typical "Fury" of the Greeks. Agamemnon is an unattractive character, and the hatred of his wife is not unreasonable. Nothing, however, can excuse Clytemnestra's crime or ward off her punishment. Her son, Orestes, becomes the avenger of his father, and in the *Choephoroi*, the sequel to the *Agamemnon*, Orestes kills his mother. He is pursued by the Erinyes, the daughters of the night and the ministers of punishment. In a third

play, the *Eumenides*, Orestes after great tribulation is forgiven by the gods. Here, as elsewhere, Æschylus insists that sin must be paid for before it can be forgiven.

Æschylus died in 456 B.C. in Sicily, where he is said to have gone in dudgeon at the fact that the first prize at one of the great dramatic contests at Athens had been awarded to his younger rival Sophocles.

## § 4

Sophocles was one of the sunniest-natured great writers in the history of literature. He was born in 495 B.C., and was thirty years younger than Æschylus, and fifteen years older than Euripides. As a boy, he was famous for his good looks and his proficiency in music and gymnastics. When he was sixteen he was chosen to lead the chorus of youths which celebrated the great sea-victory of Salamis. He appeared at this festival naked, crowned with a garland, and carrying a lyre. Like Æschylus, he was brought up in an atmosphere of patriotic fervour, but his youth was spent in a more settled age.

The art-loving Athenians held Sophocles in great pride and affection. He was known as the "Attic Bee," and his character was summed up by Aristophanes, after the dramatist's death, when he said that he was "kindly in the Shades even as he was on earth." The popularity of Sophocles can be judged from the fact that in his fifty-seventh year he was appointed, by popular acclaim, general in the Samian war. It may seem to us remarkable to appoint a general simply on account of his genius as a poet, but perhaps there is as much to be said for this method of selection as for the mediæval plan of selecting a commander of military or naval forces on account of his birth. It is not, however, surprising that Pericles should have said that he vastly preferred Sophocles as a poet than as a soldier.

A beauty- and pleasure-loving poet, living in a beauty- and pleasure-loving age, could hardly be expected to live according to the tenets of Puritan morality. Moderation, never abstention, was the typical Greek virtue. Plato recalls that, at the end of his life, Sophocles rejoiced at his release from the thralldom of passion. "Most gladly have I escaped from that, and I feel as if I had escaped from a mad and furious master."

Sophocles wrote over a hundred dramas, of which only seven remain to us—*Œdipus the King*, *Œdipus Colonus*, *Ajax*, the *Antigone*, *Electra*, the *Trachiniæ* and *Philoctetes*. He introduced certain reforms into the conventional form of the drama which had been employed by Æschylus. He gave the actors finer costumes, he increased the number of the chorus, and



he sometimes allowed three actors to be on the stage at the same time where Æschylus usually only allowed two. In this way the dialogue became of much greater importance dramatically. Goethe said of Sophocles's plays: "His characters all possess the gift of eloquence, and know how to explain the motives for their actions so convincingly that the hearer is almost always on the side of the last speaker."

While the plots of Sophocles's plays are tragic, and while he never escaped from the prevailing Greek idea of Nemesis, the fate which pursues the whole world, there is in his dramas a far greater serenity than there is in those of Æschylus, the serenity of the age in which Athenian society realised its ideals and its aspirations more completely than any human society has done since.

The *Antigone* may be considered as typical of Sophocles's art.<sup>1</sup>

Creon, king of Thebes, has decreed that the body of Polynices, who has been killed during an assault on the city, shall remain unburied: "It hath been published to the town that none shall entomb him or mourn, but leave unwept, unsepulchred, a welcome store for the birds, as they spy him, to feast on at will." In spite of the king's decree, Antigone, the sister of Polynices, determines to bury her brother: "I will bury him: well for me to die in doing that. I shall rest, a loved one with him whom I have loved, sinless in my crime; for I owe a longer allegiance to the dead than to the living."

Arrested for her disobedience and taken before Creon, Antigone made no attempt at denial. She knew the king's edict and what must be the consequence of her act. "For me to meet this doom is trifling grief; but if I had suffered my mother's son to lie in death an unburied corpse, that would have grieved me." Antigone is condemned to be buried alive. "in a rocky vault."

There is a love-interest in the play. Antigone is betrothed to Hæmon the son of Creon. Hæmon pleads to his father for her, but in vain. The dialogue in the scene between father and son is particularly vivid and extraordinarily modern. Creon is equally deaf to the advice of Teiresias, the blind prophet. The blind man warns the king that swift punishment will follow his obstinacy:

Thou shalt not live through many more courses of the sun's swift chariot, ere one begotten of thine own loins shall have been given by thee, a corpse for corpses; because thou hast thrust children of the sunlight to the shades, and ruthlessly lodged a living soul in the grave.

And it does. Hæmon hangs himself by the side of Antigone's tomb, and his mother, Eurydice, stabs herself in sorrow for the death of her son.

<sup>1</sup> The quotations are from Sir Richard Jebb.

Creon, "a rash and foolish man," is left to mourn alone. The moral of the play is summed up by the Chorus :

Wisdom is the supreme part of happiness ; and reverence towards the gods must be inviolate. Great words of prideful men are ever punished with great blows, and in old age, teach the chastened to be wise.

It will be seen that there is a far greater humanity in Sophocles's tragedy than can be found in Æschylus, but in all the Sophocles plays men remain "the playthings of the gods." To quote Gilbert Murray's translation of the full chorus in *Œdipus the King* :

Ye citizens of Thebes, behold ; 'tis Œdipus that passeth here,  
Who read the riddle-word of Death, and mightiest stood of mortal men,  
And Fortune loved him, and the folk that saw him turned and looked again.  
Lo, he is fallen, and around great storms and the out-reaching sea !  
Therefore, O Man, beware, and look toward the end of things that be,  
The last of sights, the last of days ; and no man's life account as gain  
Ere the full tale be finished and the darkness find him without pain.

Sophocles lived to a tranquil old age. His epitaph was written in the famous lines :

Thrice happy Sophocles ! In good old age,  
Praised as a man, and as a craftsman praised,  
He died : his many tragedies were fair,  
And fair his end, nor knew he any sorrow.

## § 5

Æschylus was a soldier ; Sophocles was a patriotic Athenian, taking more than a dilettante interest in the public affairs of his city. Euripides, the third and youngest of the great Greek dramatists, was a recluse, out of tune with the times, detesting the moods of the Athenian mob, professing to prefer the simple life of the country to the life of the town. As an artist he was an innovator, and his innovations, his breaking with tradition, made him the butt of Aristophanes, a Tory of Tories who hated all changes. Euripides was a sour-tempered man and loathed being laughed at :

My spirit loathes  
Those mockers whose unbridled mockery  
Invades grave themes.

The poet's temper was probably made the sourer by the fact that he had two wives, both of whom were unfaithful to him. Towards the end of his life he left Athens in disgust to live in Macedonia, where he wrote his last play, the *Bacchæ*. His favour with the king roused the jealousy of



certain courtiers, who plotted that he should be attacked and killed by savage dogs.

When Euripides began to write, the Athenians had ceased to believe in the gods, whose existence and ever-present power were the basis of the plays of Æschylus. The age of faith had passed. Euripides was compelled to use the elaborate method of the Greek stage, but he chose men and women, not gods, for his *dramatis personæ*, and, for this reason, he is regarded as the father of romantic drama.

While in many aspects the poet was out of tune with his age, he shared its scepticism. His unbelief had a moral basis. To him, the legends were immoral. If they were true, then gods were worthy of neither worship nor respect. If they were untrue, the whole fabric of the ancient Greek religion fell to pieces. He was tolerant of the ancestor worship, common in ancient Greece as in China. He appears to have had no definite belief or disbelief in immortality, nor was he able to accept the existence of "the eternal, not ourselves, making for righteousness." Aristophanes called him an atheist, and the charge was not unjust. But he insists that the absence of belief in God or the gods does not affect morality. Remember that Euripides was a Greek. To him virtue was attractive because it was beautiful. Apart altogether from any consideration of rewards or punishments, happiness or unhappiness, virtue was to be followed and admired for the sake of its beauty.

In the plays of Euripides, there is an acute analysis of character, particularly of the character of women, and this complete understanding of women caused Gilbert Murray to call the poet "the classic Ibsen."

Euripides wrote at least seventy-five plays, of which eighteen are in existence. Perhaps the best-known of them, the *Medea* has been described by Gilbert Murray as a tragedy of character and situation. It is one of the poet's earliest works, and it expresses the youth of a writer who is "a sceptic and a devotee of truth." The story of Jason and Medea has been partly told in these pages. The play begins when Jason has grown weary of his sorceress mistress, and has married the only daughter of the king of Corinth. Jason has become a middle-aged man, weary of a hectic love-affair and intent only on his career. Medea is now a woman "sullen-eyed and hot with hate." For his daughter's sake the king of Corinth banishes her from the city, allowing her one day's grace before she need leave. In a bitter scene with Jason she upbraids him for his ingratitude. It was she who had helped him to gain the Golden Fleece; it was she who had saved his life; it was she who had killed his usurping uncle Pelias; and at the end of her upbraiding the leader of the Chorus comments:

Dire and beyond all healing is the hate  
When hearts that loved are turned to enmity,

Jason is resentful, as men always are under the lashes of a woman's tongue:

Would to God  
We mortals by some other seed could raise  
Our fruits, and no blind women block our ways !

Medea is not the woman to be slighted with impunity, and she plans a complete and horrible revenge. To her rival she will send a deadly gift :

Fine robings and a carcanet of gold,  
Which raiment let her once but take and fold  
About her, a foul death that girl shall die,  
And all who touch her in her agony.

But even this will not satisfy Medea. Jason must be left, not only wifeless, but childless. To wound her faithless lover she will kill her own children :

For never child of mine shall Jason see  
Hereafter living, never shall beget  
From his new bride.

In a second interview with Jason she pretends that she is ready to submit to her fate and, when she catches sight of her children, she bursts into tears and, for a few minutes, becomes human.

Ah ! wondrous hopes my poor heart had in you,  
How you would tend me in my age, and do  
The shroud about me with your own dear hands,  
When I lay cold.

But the melting mood soon passes. She rejoices when she hears of the death of the king's daughter, and she determines that her children must die too. She must not tarry in winning the "crown of dire inevitable sin," and the children are hurried to their death. Jason is told of Medea's intention, and frantically endeavours to save his children's lives. He batters at the door of Medea's house, but the children are already dead, and, appearing on the roof in her chariot of winged dragons on which are the children's bodies, she prophesies the fate which is awaiting Jason himself :

For thee, behold, death draweth on,  
Evil and lonely, like thine heart : the hands  
Of thine old Argo, rotting where she stands,  
Shall smite thine head in twain, and bitter be  
To the last end thy memories of me.

The moral is that to do evil is to contrive suffering. Jason behaved to Medea with base ingratitude. His bad action brought horrible results, not



only to himself but to others, while Medea sorrowfully proclaimed herself the victim of her own hard heart. The punishment may seem grotesquely excessive, but that often happens in life, and Euripides insists that, excessive or not, punishment inevitably follows sin, the bill must be paid. To live morally is to live beautifully. To live immorally is to live dangerously, wrongdoing always leading to disaster.

Aristotle lauded the genius of Euripides, and when he died Sophocles, an artist incapable of jealousy, with all the citizens put on mourning. With his death the great age of Greek drama came to an end.

## § 6

Aristophanes, a contemporary of the tragic poets, was the supreme master of Greek comedy, which in his hands was a mixture of romanticism and topical jokes, the expression of a desire to get away in the manner, let us say, of Sir James Barrie from the pressure of the realities of the moment, combined with the high-spirited but effervescent buffoonery which nowadays is associated with the music-hall. Aristophanes may be compared with a modern writer of French revues. His plays are witty comments on the follies and foibles of his time.

Aristophanes was born in 448 B.C. Little is known of the details of his life, and of his fifty-four comedies only eleven have been preserved. Aristophanes was conservative, hating wars, democracy, and "intellectuals." He giped at warmongers, demagogues, philosophers, and lawyers. In his gay moods he writes with a charm that, as has been well said, has a genuine Shakespearean flavour, as witness this chorus from his comedy *The Frogs*. The translation is again by Gilbert Murray :

Then on 'mid the meadows deep,  
Where thickets the rosebuds creep  
And the dewdrops are pearliest :  
A jubilant step advance  
In our own, our eternal dance,  
Till its joy the Glad Fates entrance  
Who threaded it earliest.

For ours is the sunshine bright,  
Yes, ours is the joy of light,  
All pure without danger :  
For we thine Elect have been,  
Thy secrets our eyes have seen,  
And our hearts we have guarded clean  
Toward kinsman and stranger.

## § 7

The most interesting and important of the few remnants of Greek lyric poetry that have come down to us are the work of Sappho, the poetess, who lived on the island of Lesbos some hundred and fifty years before the time of the Greek dramatists. She was held by the Greeks in as high regard as Homer himself, being variously referred to as the "Tenth Muse" and the "Flower of the Graces." Only one of her lyrics, the "Hymn to Aphrodite," exists in its entirety, but some fragments of her writing have been discovered in recent years written on Egyptian papyri. J. A. Symonds says that the world has suffered no greater loss than the loss of Sappho's poems. The Greek critics, who were lucky enough to read them, claimed every line as perfect, and the fragments that are left to us justify the assertion that Sappho's writing was distinguished by an absolutely inimitable grace. Two of her epigrams are preserved in the Greek Anthology. Here is one written for a fisherman's grave :

To Pelagon Meniscus gave  
This oar and basket for his grave,  
That those who pass his tomb might see  
How small a fisher's wealth can be.

The Greek Anthology has a curious and interesting history. It was originally a collection of epigrams compiled about the year 200 B.C. The Greeks used to write verses on their temples and tombs and public buildings, and it was from these verses that the first Anthology was composed. Other collections of lyric poetry and later epigrams were made at various times from the year 60 B.C. until the sixth century A.D., when the whole of these compilations were published in seven books, which were revised and rearranged by a Constantinople scholar in the tenth century. A copy of this last collection was discovered by chance in the Palatine Library at Heidelberg in the year 1606, and was presented to Pope Gregory the Fifteenth in 1623. It is still in the Vatican Library.

The verses, as J. A. Symonds has said, introduce us to the minutest facts of private life in Greece from the earliest classic times to the decadent days of the Eastern Empire. Many English poets have translated some or other of these exquisite verses. Perhaps the best-known translation is Shelley's version of Plato's epitaph for his friend Aster :

Thou wert the morning star among the living  
Ere thy fair light had fled ;  
Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus giving  
New splendour to the dead.



## § 8

So far as prose writing is concerned, the things that mainly preoccupied the ancients were oratory, history, and philosophy. Demosthenes the Athenian was the most famous of all Greek orators. He was eager for a united Greece with Athens, not as a tyrant, but as a single-minded leader and inspirer. He opposed all hazardous adventures. He attacked corruption. In a dozen respects he proved himself a long-sighted cautious statesman. Always he pitted himself against Philip of Macedon, denouncing his plots against Hellenic liberty in the series of famous speeches known as the Philippics.

The Greek historians best known to us are Xenophon, a general turned war correspondent, Herodotus, and Thucydides. Herodotus, the "father of history," wrote just after Athenian civilisation had been delivered from the fear of the Persians. He was not content to describe the immediate forces which led to the great campaign which resulted in the Greek victories of Marathon and Salamis, but further back still into the history of Egypt, about which he could only guess.

Thucydides wrote after the great internal struggle in Greece which brought about the downfall of the Athenian Empire, and with its downfall the end of Greek classical literature. This history of the Peloponnesian War is conceived not so much as a record as a work of art. We get a picture of the triumph of Athens and her gradual leadership of a group of island-states, of the rise to power and the unchallenged eminence of Pericles, and of all those elements in the policy of Pericles and of the city-state which he ruled which were the seeds of future disaster.

The great Greek biographer, Plutarch, though writing in Greek, wrote under the Roman Empire and within the Christian era. His *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* had probably more influence on modern thought when the classics came to be studied again at the Renaissance than any other single book. In the translation by Sir Thomas North they were the source of Shakespeare's Roman plays. They gave the impulse to the practice of biography in England which began with the books we have just mentioned, and they have been a constant inspiration to moralists and statesmen. Probably no book except the Bible had a stronger influence in England in Elizabethan times.

## § 9

The dominating figure in Athens at the end of the fifth century B.C. was the philosopher, Socrates, the son of a stonemason, and himself "a



clumsy and slovenly figure." The dominating figures in the opening years of the fourth century were Plato, the pupil of Socrates, and Aristotle. Socrates was never able to write, and his teachings have been preserved in Plato's *Dialogues*, though it remains doubtful how much of the philosophy is the master's and how much the pupil's. Plato lived to be eighty. Except for two visits to Sicily, where he endeavoured, with tragic failure, to put his political theories into practice, he lived his long life in Athens, teaching philosophy in the shaded portico of his Academy, which was pleasantly situated in a public park a mile outside the city gates. Among his pupils was Aristotle, afterwards the tutor of Alexander the Great. In later years he had his own school at Athens at the Lyceum. Aristotle was the father of modern science. But neither with Aristotle's science nor with the philosophy of Socrates and Plato is this OUTLINE concerned.

Plato was, however, also a great literary artist with the characteristic Greek love of beauty and of life. His writings consist of the early *Dialogues*, the *Republic*, the first description of Utopia ever written, and the *Laws*, in which he developed his political teaching.

The fundamental ideas of the *Republic*, the most famous of Plato's books, is that the good man can only exist in the good state. In Plato's time the old Greek devotion to the state, to service for the common weal, had degenerated into self-seeking. Rulers had grown corrupt. Politicians thought only of the "spoils." And with corruption had come ignorance. The leaders of the people were blind and selfish. The first essential was that the rulers should be educated, properly prepared for their positions. Children should be taught to love beauty and hate ugliness, and to "recognise and welcome reason." And since beauty and knowledge are the substance of God, the end of Plato's idea of education was the realisation of God and the service of man.

But even the educated may deteriorate. A youth may be trained for service only to become the slave of self-seeking. So for his governing class Plato proposed the abolition of the family and of private property, both calculated, he contended, to encourage exclusiveness and selfishness. Plato was a eugenicist. The State was to regulate the association of the sexes, and to look after children immediately after birth. Mothers and fathers were not even to know their own children, lest favouritism and unequal treatment should prevail and all the children of each generation were to be brought up as brothers and sisters. It must be remembered that Plato was only thinking of the creation of an ideal ruling caste. He had no thought for the mass of the people, who were to be left with their own goods, their own families, and without his idealistic education. He was dreaming of a people's aristocracy. It should be added that the theories propounded in the *Republic* were severely criticised by Aristotle. They are far away



from the tracts of modern Socialism, and they are, to some extent, kin to the philosophy of Nietzsche.

Plato's quality as a writer is exhibited in his wonderful description of the death of Socrates in the *Phædo*. The old philosopher was, it will be remembered, condemned in the year 399 B.C. to drink a draught of deadly hemlock on the trumped-up charge that he had corrupted the youth of Athens. Plato says :

Soon the jailer, who was the servant of the Eleven, entered and stood by him, saying : " To you, Socrates, whom I know to be the noblest and gentlest and best of all who ever came to this place, I will not impute the angry feelings of other men, who rage and swear at me when, in obedience to the authorities, I bid them drink the poison—indeed, I am sure that you will not be angry with me ; for others, as you are aware, and not I, are the guilty cause. And so fare you well, and try to bear lightly what must needs be ; you know my errand." Then bursting into tears he turned away and went out.

Socrates looked at him and said : " I return your good wishes, and I will do as you bid." Then turning to us, he said : " How charming the man is ! since I have been in prison he has always been coming to see me, and at times he would talk to me, and was as good as could be to me and now see how generously he sorrows for me. But we must do as he says, Crito ; let the cup be brought, if the poison is prepared : if not, let the attendant prepare some."

" Yet," said Crito, " the sun is still upon the hilltops, and many a one has taken the draught late, and after the announcement has been made to him he has eaten and drunk, and indulged in sensual delights ; do not hasten, then, there is still time."

Socrates said : " Yes, Crito, and they of whom you speak are right in doing thus, for they think that they will gain by the delay ; but I am right in not doing thus, for I do not think that I should gain anything by drinking the poison a little later ; I should be sparing and saving a life which is already gone : I could only laugh at myself for this. Please, then, to do as I say, and not refuse me."

Crito, when he heard this, made a sign to the servant, and the servant went in, and remained for some time, and then returned with the jailer carrying a cup of poison. Socrates said : " You, my good friend, who are experienced in these matters, shall give me directions how I am to proceed." The man answered : " You have only to walk about until your legs are heavy, and then to lie down, and the poison will act." At the same time he handed the cup to Socrates, who in the easiest and gentlest manner, without the least fear or change of colour or feature, looking at the man Echecrates, with all his eyes, as his manner was, took the cup and said : " What do you say about making a libation out of this cup to any god ? May I, or not ?" The man answered : " We only prepare, Socrates, just as much as we deem enough." " I understand," he said ; " yet I may and must pray to the gods to prosper my journey from this to the other world—may this, then, which is my prayer, be granted to me." Then holding the cup to his lips, quite readily and cheerfully he drank off the poison. And hitherto most of us had been able to control our sorrow ; but now when



we saw him drinking, and saw too that he had finished the draught, we could no longer forbear, and in spite of myself my own tears were flowing fast ; so that I covered my face and wept over myself, for certainly I was not weeping over him, but at the thought of my own calamity in having lost such a companion. Nor was I the first, for Crito, when he found himself unable to restrain his tears, had got up and moved away, and I followed ; and at that moment, Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, broke out in a loud cry which made cowards of us all. Socrates alone retained his calmness : " What is this strange outcry ? " he said. " I sent away the women mainly in order that they might not offend in this way, for I have heard that a man should die in peace. Be quiet, then, and have patience."

When we heard that, we were ashamed, and refrained our tears ; and he walked about until, as he said, his legs began to fail, and then he lay on his back, according to the directions, and the man who gave him the poison now and then looked at his feet and legs ; and after a while he pressed his foot hard and asked him if he could feel ; and he said, " No " ; and then his leg, and so upwards and upwards, and showed us that he was cold and stiff. And he felt them himself, and said : " When the poison reaches the heart, that will be the end." He was beginning to grow cold about the groin, when he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and said (they were his last words)—he said : " Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius ; will you remember to pay the debt ? " " The debt shall be paid," said Crito ; " is there anything else ? " There was no answer to this question ; but in a minute or two a movement was heard, and the attendants uncovered him ; his eyes were set, and Crito closed his eyes and mouth.

Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend, whom I may truly call the wisest, and justest, and best of all the men whom I have ever known.

## § 10

No two peoples were ever more unlike than the Greeks and the Romans. The Greeks were essentially artists, loving beauty, caring for all that made the individual life dignified and happy. They were intellectually adventurous, inquisitive in speculation, and daring in the profession of their own beliefs. The Romans, on the other hand, were eminently practical and unimaginative ; their genius was for war and politics, and their chief concern was for order and commercial prosperity. Wherever the Roman armies went they carried law and built roads.

Contrasting his countrymen with the Greeks, Virgil summarised the work of the Romans when he wrote in the *Æneid* :

Others, belike, with happier grace  
From bronze or stone shall call the face,  
Plead doubtful causes, map the skies,  
And tell when planets set or rise ;



But, Roman, thou—do thou control  
 The nations far and wide,  
 Be this thy genius, to impose  
 The rule of peace on vanquished foes,  
 Show pity to the humbled soul,  
 And crush the sons of pride.

The Romans had a genius for administration and colonisation, propitiating the peoples whom they conquered by the justice of their government and by their splendid scheme of recognising every man born in a province occupied by the Roman legions as a Roman citizen.

The history of Greece, so far as we know it, begins with a magnificent achievement. Homer was the first of the Greeks. But although we know what happened in Rome so long ago as the eighth century before Christ, there was no Roman literature until six hundred years later—there was no Roman literature, indeed, until the Romans came into intimate contact with Greek civilisation. Early in the third century B.C., after the first war with Carthage, the Romans conquered the island of Sicily, which had been colonised by the Greeks centuries before. The evidence of Greek culture exists to this day in Sicily, and at Taormina and at Syracuse there are far more complete Greek theatres than there can be found anywhere in Greece itself. After the conquest of Sicily, Greek scholars and artists settled in Rome, and the Romans, then a rude people with no art, no literature, and with the baldest and most unimaginative of religions, were dazzled and fascinated by a culture which they learned for the first time.

Latin literature began with the translation of the *Odyssey* in the third century B.C., and afterwards of the Greek tragedies by Greek slaves in the service of Roman masters. Again, under the influence of the Greeks, the Romans began to build theatres, imitating Athenian models, but building of wood instead of stone, and using the orchestra, where the Greek chorus was placed, for the seats of the senators and other important persons. The plays produced in these early Roman theatres were comedies based on the Greek, and often translations of the comic dramatists who followed Aristophanes in Athens.

The first important writer of Latin comedies was Plautus, whose writings belong to the end of the third century and the beginning of the second century B.C. He wrote in all a hundred and thirty plays, of which twenty are still in existence. They are strangely like modern French farces, the fun being derived from foolish fathers, spendthrift sons, jealous husbands, cunning slaves, and traffickers in all sorts of vice. Plautus was followed by Terence, who was born in Carthage, and brought to Rome as a slave. Nearly all the plays of Terence were adaptations from the Greek, and are instinct with the essentially Greek idea that conduct should be based on



reason, and consideration should accompany authority. Terence died in 149 B.C. Subsequently Roman writers agreed in eulogising the purity of his Latin style.

The Romans were never able to write tragedy at all comparable with the magnificence of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Ennius, a contemporary of Terence, who is sometimes called the father of Roman poetry, boasted that the soul of Homer had migrated into him through a peacock. But there is no evidence in his epics or in his tragedies that this was a fact.

Roughly it may be said that there was no Latin literature of outstanding importance until the first century B.C. That was the golden age of Rome, so far as letters are concerned, as the fifth century B.C. was the golden age of Athens. It was the century of Cicero and Cæsar, Horace and Virgil, Livy, Ovid, Catullus, and Lucretius, the age in which nine-tenths of the Latin literature that has come down to us was produced. This century saw the end of the Republic and the beginning of the Empire. It was the time of Rome's greatest material prosperity and glory. Her legions had marched east and west, north and south, carrying their eagles into Asia, to the borders of the African desert, to the banks of the Danube, through Spain, Italy, and England. Rome was the first world-empire, and it was when Rome was at the very apex of her glory that her literature was produced. The same thing happened in Greece, for, as has already been shown, the Greek drama followed the Athenian defeat of the Persians.

## § II

Virgil, who was born in 70 B.C. and died in 19 B.C., was the most patriotic of all Roman writers. He loved Italy as Shakespeare loved England. His father was a small farmer, and he was brought up in the country, retaining through his life a deep love of country life and the Spartan peasant virtues. His *Eclogues*, a series of pastoral poems, were begun in his country home and finished in Rome when he was thirty-three. Seven years later he completed the *Georgics*, in which, at the suggestion of Mæcenas, the Roman millionaire who loved to be the patron of poets, he described the year's work of the Italian farmer.

The *Georgics* is a poem of masterly beauty and finish. It is a glorification of the labour of the fields, but it is more than that. Virgil, the farmer's son, idealises the work of husbandry with knowledge and sympathy, and Virgil, the nature-lover, revels in the varied splendour of the world. Sunshine and storm, summer stars and winter floods, comets and eclipses, all delight the poet, whose muse can also joy in peaceful



scenes of crops and pasturelands. For wild animals he has a strong attraction, and it has been well said that for those who have lived close to nature, particularly in southern lands, no other book possesses the charm of the *Georgics*.

Virgil's great poem the *Æneid* was finished in 19 B.C. He left instructions that the manuscript should be destroyed—it was his intention to devote three more years to polishing the poem—but his wish was overruled by order of the Emperor Augustus. In the *Æneid* Virgil set out to write a poem which should explain to the people of the time in which he lived their origin and the reasons for their existence. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* gave the Greek peoples all round the fringes of the Mediterranean a story of their origin which satisfied and even excited them. The Romans, who had gradually won political dominance over all the places where Greek legends were current, had themselves, except for the trivial story of Romulus and Remus symbolised for them by the bronze figure of the wolf in the Capitol, nothing in the past to which they could attach themselves.

Virgil provided Rome in the *Æneid*, his Homeric epic, with a national story, beautifully told, full of the cultured excellences of a man using a language which had reached at the moment the pitch of literary perfection, and with just enough relation to the currently known legends of Greece as to win a polite, if not a sincere, acceptance from the readers of the time.

Æneas, the hero of the epic, is one of the Trojan heroes. After the capture of Troy by the Greeks, he makes a long seven years' voyage westward, eventually landing at Carthage on the north coast of Africa. The first lines of Dryden's translation of the *Æneid* indicate the heroic note of the poem :

Arms and the man I sing, who, forc'd by fate,  
And haughty Juno's unrelenting hate,  
Expell'd and exil'd, left the Trojan shore.

Dido, the queen of Carthage, falls in love with Æneas, who tells her the story of the fall of Troy. In this story Virgil narrates, for the first time, the legend of the Wooden Horse, in which on the advice of the sage Nestor the Greeks hid themselves and thus contrived to enter the city.

Æneas is warned by the gods not to stay in Carthage, and he prepares secretly to depart. Dido discovers his intention, and when she finds that all her persuasion and cajolery cannot alter his purpose, she stabs herself with the hero's sword.

It is in the sixth book that Virgil links the Trojan with the city that the poet loved. Æneas lands on the western shore of Italy and hurries to the cavern of the Sibyl. He tells the prophetess that he is bound for Hades

to see the face of his sire Anchises, and with her as his guide he descends to the shadowy homes of the dead. "Now, man thyself, Æneas, and follow me."

They are ferried across the Styx by Charon, the gloomy ferryman, passing the realms of despair, haunted by phantoms and monsters, where Æneas sees many of the heroes of the Trojan War, and where he meets Queen Dido, hate burning unquenchable in her eyes. At last they reach Elysium, where Æneas's father reveals to him the future glory of his race. He bids him behold the spirits of his descendants, the Romans that are to be, "the breed of heroes" destined to return to earth to fill the world with their glory. Leaving the land of Spirits, Æneas arrives at the mouth of the Tiber. He is welcomed by Latinus, king of the Laurentines, whose daughter Æneas marries, and founds a fabled city—and thus the poet involves the mythical origin of Rome.

The charm of the *Æneid* lies in its deep reverence for the old gods, the old spirit, and the old glory of Rome. The characters themselves have little of the heroic attraction of Homer's creations, for Virgil generally lacked the gift of endowing his characters with vivid humanity. Dido is his greatest success. In the fourth book of the *Æneid* she is one of the most living and warm-blooded women in poetry, and her story is the first and one of the greatest pieces of romantic writing in the world. She appears to Æneas a vision of dignity and loveliness :

The beauteous Dido, with a num'rous train  
And pomp of guards, ascends the sacred fane.  
Such on Eurotas' banks, or Cynthus' height,  
Diana seems ; and so she charms the sight,  
When in the dance the graceful goddess leads  
The choir of nymphs, and overtops their heads :  
Known by her quiver, and her lofty mien,  
She walks majestic, and she looks their queen ;  
Latona sees her shine above the rest,  
And feeds with secret joy her silent breast.  
Such Dido was ; with such becoming state,  
Amidst the crowd, she walks serenely great.  
Their labour to her future sway she speeds,  
And passing with a gracious glance proceeds ;  
Then mounts the throne, high plac'd before the shrine :  
In crowds around, the swarming people join.  
She takes petitions, and dispenses laws,  
Hears and determines every private cause ;  
Their tasks in equal portions she divides,  
And where unequal, there by lots decides.

Virgil was buried at Naples. The poet was a tall, dark, handsome man, of a modest and gentle disposition, silent, diffident, and religious, living a



quiet life, loving his friends and loving his country. No great writer has ever been held in greater affection by his contemporaries, and his fame in his own country and his own time has never been dimmed. The scholars of the Middle Ages knew his writings as they knew the Bible and the copious writings of the Fathers of the Church. The Renaissance gave him an even wider appreciation. When Shakespeare made Jessica say :

On such a night as this  
 Stood Dido with a willow in her hand  
 Upon the sad sea banks and waved her love  
 To come again to Carthage.

he was writing in a spirit steeped in Virgilian influence. A part of the permanence of Virgil's influence (though this would not have affected Shakespeare) was due to a misunderstanding of one of his poems. In the fourth section of the *Eclogues* there is a passage widely taken by the early Christians to be a prophecy on the part of the poet of the birth of Christ :

Come are those last days that the Sibyl sang :  
 The ages' mighty march begins anew.  
 Now comes the virgin, Saturn reigns again :  
 Now from high heaven descends a wondrous race.  
 Thou on the newborn babe—who first shall end  
 That age of iron, bid a golden dawn  
 Upon the broad world—chaste Lucina, smile :

On thee, child, everywhere shall earth, untilled,  
 Show'r, her first baby-offerings, vagrant stems  
 Of ivy, foxglove, and gay briar, and bean ;  
 Unbid, the goats shall come big-uddered home,  
 Nor monstrous lions scare the herded kine.  
 Thy cradle shall be full of pretty flowers :  
 Die must the serpent, treacherous poison-plants  
 Must die ; and Syria's roses spring like weeds.

Virgil became then, in a sense, one of the forerunners of the Christian religion, and the honour which was paid to him in this respect remains for ever in the circumstance that Dante in *The Divine Comedy* made Virgil his guide through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven.

## § 12

Quintus Horatius Flaccus—universally named as Horace—of all the Roman classics is the most loved and quoted. He is the most companionable. When Voltaire called him the best of preachers, he meant that

he preached not from a pulpit but in the friendliest way at your shoulder. It has been said of him, "He probed every wound with so gentle a hand that the patient smiled under the operation."

He is the best fellow to go a walk with, unfailing in hours of vacancy or discomfort, always ready to give you a felicitous phrase or a flash of tender wit to carry off your mood. It is not his part to exalt the deeds of heroes, as did Virgil, or to unfold the mysteries of the universe like Lucretius, or to "treat of Fate, and Chance, and change in human life," in the ways of the Greek tragedians; he is the tactful and intimate adviser who puts in his word when he sees it will be helpful. As Pope has it:

Horace still charms with graceful negligence  
And without method talks us into sense,  
Will, like a friend, familiarly convey  
The truest notions in the easiest way.

Ruskin, writing to an inquirer on Bible-reading, boldly said: "The best message for any of your young men who really are trying to read their Bibles is—whatever they first chance to read, on any morning. But here's a Pagan passage for them, which will be a grandly harmonised bass for them for whatsoever words they get on the New Year." The passage he referred to was Horace's in his Epistle to Albius Tibullus, which Conington renders:

Let hopes and sorrows, fears and angers be,  
And think each day that dawns the last you'll see;  
For so the hour that greets you unforeseen  
Will bring with it enjoyment twice as keen.

Horace died just eight years before the Christian era. He was sprung from the people. His father, indeed, had been a slave, and as a freedman he rose no higher than to be a kind of commission agent at auctions. Yet to him Horace owed everything. After leaving school in Rome he finished his education at Athens, and was there when the news came of the assassination of Julius Cæsar. When Brutus and Cassius arrived to take command of the Roman provinces in the East, Horace and his fellow-students were swept into the campaign which failed at Philippi. Although then only twenty-two he impressed Brutus and received the command of a legion. But this episode was foreign to his character and career. It must have advanced him socially, however, when, on returning to Rome under the amnesty proclaimed by Octavius, he became a civil servant. He began to make distinguished friends, and his career was established when Virgil introduced him to the wealthy and cultured Mæcenas, the friend and chief adviser of Augustus, whose name is synonymous with generous patronage of men of letters. In the train of Mæcenas he went to Brundisium, the



modern Brindisi, and his account of the journey is one of the most natural and vivid glimpses of Roman life and habits that we possess. It contains also a delightful reference to his meeting with his friend and fellow-poet, Virgil :

What hand-shaking ! While sense abides,  
A friend to me is worth the world besides.

Although he had fought for the Republican party, he gained the complete confidence of his new friends, and when Mæcenas presented to him a small estate in the valley of Ustica it was accepted by him with manly grace and gratitude. There is no more famous gift in literary history.

In this Sabine retreat, the little farm thirty miles from Rome, his own to enjoy, Horace fulfilled his dream of poetic retirement. Here he lived the simple life, watched the Roman world go by, invoked the Muse, cultivated his fields and had his friends to spend a few days with him as often as he could persuade them to turn their backs on the smoke, noise, and vices of Rome. And these friends, who included great soldiers, courtiers, men of affairs, and many humbler folk, loved Horace for his friendly candour about the lives they were living and the ambitions that were costing them so much in health and peace of mind.

In counselling them he counsels us all. His gospel is that of self-restraint, reasonable ambitions, contentment, and the enjoyment of life from day to day. Is his young friend, Licinius Murena, becoming giddy with success, and eager for violent political acts ? Horace, in one of his most famous odes, counsels him (the translation is by Sir Stephen E. De Vere) :

Tempt not the deep ; nor while you fly  
The storm, Licinius, steer too nigh  
The breakers on the rocky shore ;  
Hold fast, contented evermore,  
The way of Peace, the Golden Mean :  
That bounded space which lies between  
The sordid hut and palace hall.

He is always trying to abate the " will to live " in his friends when he sees that it is controlling them instead of being controlled. He pleads with his patron Mæcenas to leave the joyless feasts of Rome, and its sweltering heat, for the peace and coolness of the country :

Happy the man, and he alone,  
Who master of himself can say,  
To-day at least hath been my own,  
For I have clearly liv'd to-day :  
Then let to-morrow's clouds arise,  
Or purer suns o'erspread the cheerful skies.

PHILIP FRANCIS.

Horace's touch is so light, and his address so intimate, that he can warn a friend in the height of his prosperity that he will have to die and leave all. He does this repeatedly, as in the deathless ode to Postumus ("Eheu fugaces, Postume, Postume") :

In vain shall we war's bloody conflict shun,  
And the hoarse scudding gale  
Of Adriatic seas,  
Or fly the southern breeze,  
That through the Autumn hours wafts pestilence and bale.

For all must view Cocytus' pitchy tide  
Meandering slow, and see  
The accursed Danaids' moil,  
And that dread stone recoil,  
Sad Sisyphus is doomed to heave eternally.

Land, home, and winsome wife must all be left  
And cypresses abhorred,  
Alone of all the trees  
That now your fancy please,  
Shall shade his dust who was a little while their lord.

SIR THEODORE MARTIN.

Such exhortations are but the foil to his delightful, if very Pagan, calls to love and wine and roses, and his rallyings of coquettes like Lydia, Pyrrha, Chloe, Glycera, Lyde, and the rest. In this vein nothing is more dainty than his counsel to the too anxious Leuconoé, who had been dabbling in the occult —trying to learn her destiny from Babylonish oracles. He advises her, as he advises every young woman still, to avoid all such nonsense :

Far wiser is it to endure  
Those ills of life we cannot cure.  
What though this winter, that exhausts  
The Tyrrhene surge on shattered coasts,  
Should be the last for thee and me ?  
It matters not, Leuconoé !  
Fill high the goblet ! Envious Time  
Steals, as we speak, our fleeting prime.  
Away with hope ! Away with sorrow !  
Snatch thou To-day, nor trust To-morrow.

SIR STEPHEN E. DE VERE.

Countless modern poets have exhausted their art in trying to give the spirit of these effusions in English verse but though much can be done



the essence flies. Milton did wonders with the famous ode to Pyrrha (" *Quis multa gracilis te puer in rosa* ") in his rendering, which begins :

What slender youth bedew'd with liquid odours  
Courts thee on roses in some pleasant cave,  
Pyrrha ? for whom bind'st thou  
In wreaths thy golden hair,  
Plain in thy neatness ?

It has been suggested that Horace uttered commonplaces. He did, but they are the commonplaces which every generation needs, and he gave them lyric forms so perfect that these have been handed down through nearly two thousand years of change and tumult. It may be hinted that his philosophy is that of running away from life. It is far more just to say that it teaches us not to let life run away with our best selves, and our real capacities to enjoy and improve it. He can exhort in terms which lack nothing of grave stimulus, as in his words to Lollius :

Unless you light your early lamp, to find  
A moral book ; unless you form your mind  
To noble studies, you shall forfeit rest,  
And love or envy shall distract your breast.  
For the hurt eye an instant cure you find :  
Then why neglect for years, the sickening mind ?  
Dare to be wise ; begin, for, once begun,  
Your task is easy ; half the work is done.  
And sure the man, who has it in his power  
To practise virtue, and protracts the hour,  
Waits like the rustic, till the river dried :  
Still glides the river and will ever glide.

PHILIP FRANCIS.

Not the greatest of the Roman poets, but none is more secure of immortality than Horace. And it is pleasant to know that, like other poets, though with truer prevision, he was convinced that his songs would live. In one of his odes to Mæcenæ he flings self-doubt aside and joyously announces (we quote Sir Theodore Martin's version) :

Though cradled at a poor man's hearth,  
His offspring, I shall not  
Go down to mix with common earth,  
Forgetting and forgot.

### § 13

Apart from the heroic poetry of Virgil and the lyrics of Horace, there are three other forms of Roman poetry. There is the great philosophic

poem of Lucretius, "On the Nature of Things," written in the early part of the first century B.C. Secondly, there is what may be called the society verse of Ovid, a contemporary of Virgil and a pleasure-loving artist whose resolve to keep outside the political turmoil of his day did not prevent his being banished to a town on the banks of the Black Sea far away from the colour and gaiety of Rome. In his "Metamorphoses" Ovid retells many of the ancient Greek myths.

Finally there were the satirists of whom the most eminent was Juvenal, a much later poet, who has left us a bitter picture of Rome under the emperors, when the old patriotic spirit had disappeared, when wealth had elbowed worth out of all positions of eminence, when the parvenu flourished, and vice and vulgarity were rampant.

Juvenal, who was translated by Dryden and imitated by Dr. Johnson, did not mince words in his denunciations :

Who would not, reckless of the swarm he meets,  
Fill his wide tablets, in the public streets,  
With angry verse ? when, through the mid-day glare,  
Borne by six slaves, and in an open chair,  
The forger comes, who owes this blaze of state  
To a wet seal, and a fictitious date ;  
Comes like the soft Mæcenas, lolling by,  
And impudently braves the public eye !  
Or the rich dame, who stanch'd her husband's thirst  
With generous wine, but drugg'd it deeply first !  
And now, more dexterous than Locusta, shows  
Her country friends the beverage to compose,  
And, midst the curses of the indignant throng,  
Bears, in broad day, the spotted corpse along.

## § 14

Catullus was born at Verona about the year 87 B.C. His father, Valerius, a wealthy man, was a friend of Julius Cæsar. Catullus, not having to depend upon a patron, wrote to please himself and his friends—especially his lady-friends, of whom the chief was Lesbia, upon whose pet sparrow he wrote poems which have been the envy and despair of light versifiers ever since his day. No poet was ever so many-sided. He was one of the most witty of men ; his pathos, as displayed in the elegy on his brother, rings deep and true ; his love-songs are the finest in all antiquity ; his style is as rich in colouring as the best of Keats. It may indeed be said as truly of Catullus as of Goldsmith, that he touched nothing which he did not adorn.



## § 15

Cicero, the most famous of all the Latin prose-writers, was born in 106 B.C. He was a busy lawyer-politician, whose life was spent amid the intrigues of Roman politics at the epoch when the Republic was destroyed and the Empire began. He was a man of easy-going disposition, who always found it difficult to be rancorous, who forgave his enemies easily, and was often on the most friendly terms with the bitter foes of yesterday. Such a man must inevitably be an inconstant politician, but despite his admiration for Julius Cæsar, Cicero was an honest Republican. And, though he was a man of somewhat fearful mind, he had courage enough at the end of his life vehemently to denounce Mark Antony just after he, with Octavius, had entered Rome after defeating Brutus and Cassius at Philippi. Antony vowed vengeance, and a few days later Cicero was murdered by Popillus Lænus, who sent the head and hands of the orator to Antony, who nailed them to the front of the rostrum from which Cicero had made many of his famous speeches.

During his life, Cicero held many important public offices, but he survives more by the speeches that he made in the law courts than by his political orations. Many of these speeches are instinct with excitement and interest, and can be read to-day almost as if they had just been addressed to a jury at the Old Bailey.

Sometimes Cicero, like Burke and other modern orators, was not above writing a speech which purported to be delivered and never was. A man called Milo killed a famous and disreputable Roman named Clodius in an inn on the Appian Way. He was arrested and tried for the offence, and just as if a wealthy man to-day killed somebody at Richmond and had the money to pay for the defence, he briefed Cicero as the leading defending counsel of the time. Cicero had many great qualities, but courage was not one of them. When he went to the court to plead for his client he found it full of troops, lost his nerve, and was unable to say more than a few broken words. The prisoner was sentenced to banishment, and one day some weeks afterwards, when he was sitting at Marseilles, he received a letter from his defending counsel enclosing the speech *Pro Milone*, which is probably the most familiar work of Cicero to schoolboys. The convict who was its subject-matter liked it so well that he wrote a letter back to the barrister, saying: "I am glad that you did not deliver that speech, because if you had I should have got off, and I should not be eating this excellent mullet on which I am now lunching."

In addition to his speeches Cicero wrote philosophical treatises and a series of letters which, like Alexander Pope, he evidently anticipated would



be published. These letters throw an astonishing flood of light on the life of Rome at the end of the Republic ; and it is largely to them that we owe our intimate knowledge of the Imperial City at the beginning of the Christian era. The vehemence of Cicero's oratory may be appreciated from the peroration of his arraignment of Mark Antony, to which reference has already been made.

"Are you in any respect to be compared with Cæsar ? He had capacity, sense, memory, learning, foresight, reflection, and spirit. His warlike achievements, though ruinous to his country, were glorious to himself. Through inexpressible toil, through numberless dangers, he laid a scheme for a long possession of power. What he projected he perfected. With presents, with shows, with largesses, with entertainments, he soothed the thoughtless vulgar : by his liberality he obliged his friends ; and by a semblance of clemency, his enemies. In short, partly by fear and partly by patience, he made the habit of slavery tolerable to a free state.

"The lust of power, I own, was, indeed, common to you both ; though in no other respect can you admit of a comparison with him. But from all the misfortunes inflicted by him upon his country, this advantage accrued, that the people of Rome have learned how far any man is to be believed ; they have learned whom to trust, and of whom to beware. But this gives you no concern ; nor do you conceive what it is for brave men to have now learned how amiable in itself, how agreeable in the consequences, and how glorious it is in report, to kill a tyrant. If they could not bear with a Cæsar, will they endure Antony ?

"Believe me, the world will henceforward eagerly rush upon such an enterprise ; nor will they need ever wait long for an opportunity. Cast a considering eye, Mark Antony, at last upon your country. Reflect not on those with whom you live, but on those from whom you are descended. However you may stand with me, yet reconcile yourself to your country. But of this you are the best judge. One thing on my own part I will here openly declare : In my youth I defended my country ; in my old age I will not abandon her. The sword of Catiline I despised, and never shall I dread yours. With pleasure should I expose my person if by my blood the liberties of Rome could be immediately recovered, and the people of Rome delivered from that painful burden they have been so long in labour of. For if almost twenty years ago, in this very temple, I declared that no death could be untimely to me when Consular ; much more truly can I declare the same now, when I am an aged man. To me, Conscript Fathers, death is even desirable, now I have performed all the duties which my station and character required. Two things only I have now to wish for : The first (than which the gods themselves can bestow nothing on me more grateful) is, that I may leave Rome in the enjoyment of her liberty ;



the other, that the reward of every man be proportioned to what he has deserved of his country."

It is little wonder that after listening to this splendid eloquence, the ruthless lover of Cleopatra should have determined that Cicero should live no longer and denounce no more.

## § 16

Of all Latin books, Cæsar's *Commentaries* are most widely read in the modern world. No schoolboy can escape them. They were composed from the dispatches that he sent to the Senate at Rome during his campaigns in Gaul, and they may be compared to the dispatches written by a modern general with a literary gift. One outstanding characteristic of Cæsar was his constant care for the welfare of the common soldier.

The two most famous of the Roman historians were Livy, who was born in 59 B.C. and died in A.D. 17, and Tacitus, who lived in the first years of the Christian era. To Livy we owe the stories of the early Roman kings, of the foundation of the Roman Republic, and of the painful and sanguinary struggles by which the troubled community of Rome and its surrounding towns and villages became the controller of the Mediterranean. The parts of Livy which are generally read in the course of the ordinary English classical education are those which deal with the conflict between Rome and the Semitic power on the other side of the Mediterranean at Carthage. The Carthaginians, scattered as they were by conquest, left no surviving literature, though they themselves probably survive as the bulk of the Jewish races dispersed over the world to-day. The story as told in Livy is, therefore, a one-sided story, but it is of interest because for the first time in classical literature one can trace an author's writing to its source. Most of his material he owes to an historian called Polybius, who wrote in Greek and who, living nearer than Livy to the time of the Punic Wars, was able to obtain details which gave his account an importance not possessed by that of Livy himself.

The works of Tacitus deal with events either within the historian's own recollection or sufficiently near for him to have had trustworthy sources of information. They show a capacity for the study of character, great narrative gifts of compression and point, and a desire to use history as a means of instruction and warning to the politicians and peoples of the future. The strength of the writing of Tacitus lies in the irony and brilliance of his own comments on the emperors and statesmen with whom he deals. Possessing a mental temperament which was naturally bitter and biting, he forged a Latin style for his own use utterly unlike that of any other



Roman prose-writer. His pages overflow with epigram and with the efficient exercise of a kind of humourless wit.

Tacitus has other claims than those of his annals and histories for the attention of students of literature. He was the first Roman writer, or at any rate the first whose works have remained, to write a biography, and his life of his uncle, the Roman General Agricola, who spent most of his active military career in Britain, is the earliest piece of biographical writing we have. Nothing is more strange in the history of literature than the fact that the interest in the writing of men's lives appears late in every country—except among the Jews. The fashion, however, soon spread in Rome. There are Suetonius's *Lives of the Cæsars*, which filled in many tragic and sensational details in the more sober stories of their reigns as told by Tacitus. Above all, there is the work of Plutarch, who, though writing in Greek, wrote under the Roman Empire.

### § 17

The golden age of Latin literature, the first half of which coincided with the last years of the Republic, continued through the reign of Augustus down to about A.D. 17. The silver age came to an end with the death of Juvenal in A.D. 120. In addition to Tacitus and Juvenal the writers of the silver age included Suetonius, to whom passing reference has already been made; Seneca, the philosopher and tutor of Nero; and Martial, the epigrammist, who was described by a contemporary as "a man of talent, acuteness, and spirit, with plenty of wit and gall, and sincere as he was witty."

With the decadence of the Roman Empire came the decadence of Latin literature. The writing of poetry ceased, and the history of classical literature comes to an end with *The Golden Ass* of Lucius Apuleius, who was born in Africa, and after a grand tour of the Roman world married a rich widow, and was thus able to devote himself to literature. *The Golden Ass* is among the earliest novels ever written. It is a fictional autobiography in which the author describes how he was tried and condemned for the murder of three leathern bottles. He was brought back to life by a sorceress, whom he wished to follow in the shape of a bird, but owing to some mistake he was transformed instead into an ass. In his search for the rose-leaves that alone could give him back his human form, he had many strange adventures. He was bullied by his own horse and beaten by his own groom. He heard exactly what his friends thought of him, and had other fantastic experiences. The whole thing is amazingly interesting and often licentious. Boccaccio, Cervantes, and Le Sage borrowed incidents from *The Golden Ass*, which was first translated into English by William Adlington in 1566.

The *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius was almost the last literary achieve-



ment of the Roman Empire. Marcus Aurelius was a Roman emperor, his rule starting in A.D. 161, but it is interesting to note that he wrote in Greek. He was a man of noble character, intent on living a good life and fulfilling his obligations to his people. There were three persecutions of the Christians during his reign, but it must be remembered that in the Roman Empire of the second century the Christians were regarded with exactly the same popular dislike as the Jews were regarded in Tsarist Russia. The power of the emperor was limited ; he was always fearful of exciting widespread public disapproval, and, moreover, it is certain that Marcus Aurelius knew nothing of Christian ethics and doctrines. To him the Christians were merely enemies of the people.

The *Meditations* are a record of the emperor's daily reflections on life and the nature of man, and are a perfect expression of Stoic philosophy. This philosophy is similar to that of Epictetus, a Greek slave belonging to one of Nero's courtiers, lame, in weak health, his life spent in poverty and obscurity. Slave and emperor agreed in insisting that Virtue was its own reward, that man was helpless in the hands of God, and that whatever God did was right. The teaching of the *Meditations* is summarised in the following text from Epictetus :

Remember that you are an actor in a drama, of such a kind as the author pleases to make it. If short, of a short one ; if long, of a long one. If it be his pleasure you should act a poor man, a cripple, a governor, or a private person, see that you act it naturally. For this is your business, to act well the character assigned you ; to choose it, is another's.

## READING LIST

The following is a list of valuable books for the student of literature and culture of ancient Greece and Rome :

Gilbert Murray, *Ancient Greek Literature* (in Messrs. Heinemann's *Literatures of the World*) and *Euripides and His Age* and *Greek Studies* (Oxford University Press).

C. M. Bowra's *Ancient Greek Literature*, in the Home University Library.

J. W. Mackail, *Latin Literature* (Murray).

*The Legacy of Greece* and *The Legacy of Rome* (both from the Oxford University Press) constitute general accounts, eminently sound and very readable, of the ancient Classical civilisations. Helpful too are :

*Hellenistic Civilisation*, by W. B. Tarn (Arnold)—a remarkable book.

J. C. Stobart's *The Glory that was Greece* and *The Grandeur that was Rome* (Sidgwick & Jackson) ; pertinently illustrative of Roman civilisation is Jack Lindsay's *I Am a Roman*—verse translations from Latin literature (Nicholson & Watson).

*Greek Studies*, by Walter Pater—an eminently readable appreciation of Greek thought and art.

Lowes Dickinson's *The Greek View of Life* (Methuen) is a general introduction to Greek thought and literature.

Translations of most of the important Greek and Latin authors are accessible in such series as the Everyman's Library (Dent), the World's Classics (Oxford University Press), and Bohn's Library (George Bell).

*The Oxford Book of Greek Verse* has been admirably translated into English verse (Oxford University Press).

*Greek Poetry for Everyman*. Chosen and Translated by F. L. Lucas (Dent).

*The Oxford Translation of Aristotle* (Oxford University Press).

Messrs. George Allen & Unwin publish Prof. Gilbert Murray's admirable verse renderings of the plays of Euripides. From the same scholar and publishers come equally admirable verse renderings of Aristophanes, *The Frogs*—Æschylus, *Agamemnon*, *Prometheus Bound*, and other plays—Sophocles, *Œdipus Rex*.

The Cambridge University Press issue Sir R. C. Jebb's English prose translation of the Plays of Sophocles.

Messrs. Macmillan publish excellent editions of Plato's *Republic* and *The Trial and Death of Socrates* in their Golden Treasury Series. Plato's complete works have been translated by B. Jowett (Oxford University Press).

*Plato for Pleasure*, by Adam Fox (Westhouse), is a delightful and easy introduction to the great philosopher.

*Plato. Selected Passages*, chosen and edited by Sir R. W. Livingstone (World's Classics. Oxford University Press).

George Bell & Sons publish *The Pocket Horace* (the Latin text with Conington's translation on opposite pages), complete in one volume.

*Horace and his Lyric Poetry*, by L. P. Wilkinson (Cambridge University Press), reinterprets the life story and personality of the Roman poet.

See also *Portrait of Horace* by Alfred Noyes (Sheed & Ward).

The best translations of Virgil are those by Dryden, Conington, Mac-kail, all three in verse; and, in prose, that by Lonsdale and Lee.

*Virgil: The Eclogues and the Georgics*, translated by R. C. Trevelyan.

The greatest of all studies of Marcus Aurelius is probably Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's *Meditations of the Emperor*.

*Marcus Antoninus*, which has recently been reissued by the Oxford University Press, edited by A. S. L. Farquharson.

The Loeb Classical Library, published by Messrs. Heinemann, includes all the classical writers of importance. Every volume in this series contains the Greek or Latin text with English translation on opposite pages.



## VIII

### THE MIDDLE AGES

#### § I

##### IN DARKEST EUROPE

THE Middle Ages is the name commonly given to that period of European history that lasted from the sack and capture of Rome in A.D. 410, by the Visigoths under Alaric, to the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. Even before the passing of the Roman Empire of the West, there had been for over two hundred years a period of stagnation in which little, if any, literature was produced. Rome was, for years, fighting a losing battle against the Barbarian hordes who had crossed the old imperial frontier of the Rhine and the Danube, the most terrible of these hordes being the Huns under the leadership of Attila. The whole fabric of Roman civilisation was gradually overwhelmed by the armies of the ignorant, and was apparently, but only apparently, lost for ever.

The new masters of the West cared nothing for culture, and for the most part they could neither read nor write. In the centuries that followed, Europe saw the gradual creation of nationalities and distinctive national life, by the amalgamation of races, and after persistent struggles between rival kings and chieftains. England was invaded by Angles and Saxons, by Danes, and by Normans, who although they came from France were the descendants of Scandinavian pirates. France was overrun by Franks, a Teuton people, and by Normans; and the Norman knights established their rule as far south as the island of Sicily.

For a thousand years Europe was the scene of constant war, pestilence, and famine, the sole protection that the common people had against the reckless and ruthless tyranny of barons and overlords being the steadily increasing power of the Church. In such a time of unexampled turmoil it was impossible for any literature to be produced. The learning that had been born in Greece and nurtured in Rome was neglected and despised by the rude fighting chieftains, but the great books produced by the ancient world were not entirely lost. Copies were carefully preserved and recopied in the monasteries of the Benedictine monks, who alone cherished the remains of Roman civilisation. St. Benedict was born in 480, and was one of the brilliant lights of the Dark Ages. The monks who obeyed

his rule were ordered to read and study. Longfellow says of St. Benedict in his "Monte Cassio":

He founded here his Convent and his Rule  
Of prayer and work, and counted work as prayer;  
The pen became a clarion, and his school  
Flamed like a beacon in the midnight air.

In Ireland and certain parts of England, countries which suffered less than the continent of Europe from the mediæval ravages, the old learning survived when it was practically lost everywhere else—everywhere else in Europe, that is to say, except in Spain, which was invaded by the Arabs in 709, and remained for nearly eight hundred years wholly or partially under Moslem rule. The Arabs had come into contact with Greek culture when they overran Egypt, and while Christian Europe was wrapped in ignorance, they established schools and academies in Damascus, Bagdad, Cairo, and Cordova in Spain, where Aristotle, Plato, and Euclid were studied side by side with the Koran. In the latter half of the Middle Ages the French or English scholar eager for real knowledge made his way to Cordova, Toledo, or Seville to learn from Jewish or Moorish professors, and it is said that in the thirteenth century St. Thomas Aquinas was taught Greek and enabled to read Aristotle by a Moor from one of the Spanish universities. In the last three years of his life the "angelic Doctor," as Aquinas was styled, wrote his *Summa Theologica*, which is still accepted as the final authoritative exposition of the Roman doctrine. A tremendous and enduring masterpiece of the human mind, it is to Christian philosophy what Dante's vast poem is to Christian poetry.

There were beacon lights even in the darkest times: individual scholars like the Venerable Bede, a monk of Northumberland, who wrote a history of the Anglo-Saxons in the eighth century, and great popular movements like the Crusades. The soul of Europe began to awaken when Peter the Hermit preached the First Crusade in France and Germany, and "the common people heard him gladly." The Dark Ages, indeed, came to an end long before the close of the Middle Ages. In the thirteenth century Roger Bacon, a Franciscan monk, of Oxford, urged men not to accept dogma and authority without question and to experiment for themselves, and in many respects he anticipated the discoveries of modern times. And in the same century Dante was born. St. Augustine stands at the threshold of the Middle Ages, which are dominated at their close by the sublime figure of the great Italian poet.

St. Jerome, a contemporary of St. Augustine, was the greatest Christian scholar during the last years of the Roman Empire. St. Jerome, indeed, was a scholar before he was a Christian. He was familiar with the classic





W. L. Mansell

"CASTOR AND POLLUX CARRYING OFF HILAEIRA AND PHOEBE,  
DAUGHTERS OF LEUCIPPUS," BY RUBENS

Castor and Pollux were the twin sons of Jupiter by Leda. They accompanied Jason in his quest of the Golden Fleece. The story here illustrated is that of their violent carrying off of two daughters of Leucippus whose marriages they had been invited to attend.



*Picture Post Library*

**"PROMETHEUS CHAINED TO THE ROCK AND CONSOLED BY THE  
SPIRITS OF THE OCEAN," BY ZUBER-BUHLER**

Prometheus, who has offended Zeus, has been chained to a rock by Hephæstus. He is visited by the ocean nymphs, to whom he emphasises his services to mankind.





W. F. Mansell

"DEATH OF SOCRATES," BY DAVID  
The story of this great episode is told by Plato.



*W. F. Mansell*

"THE FATES," BY FIORENTINO  
Pitti Gallery, Florence

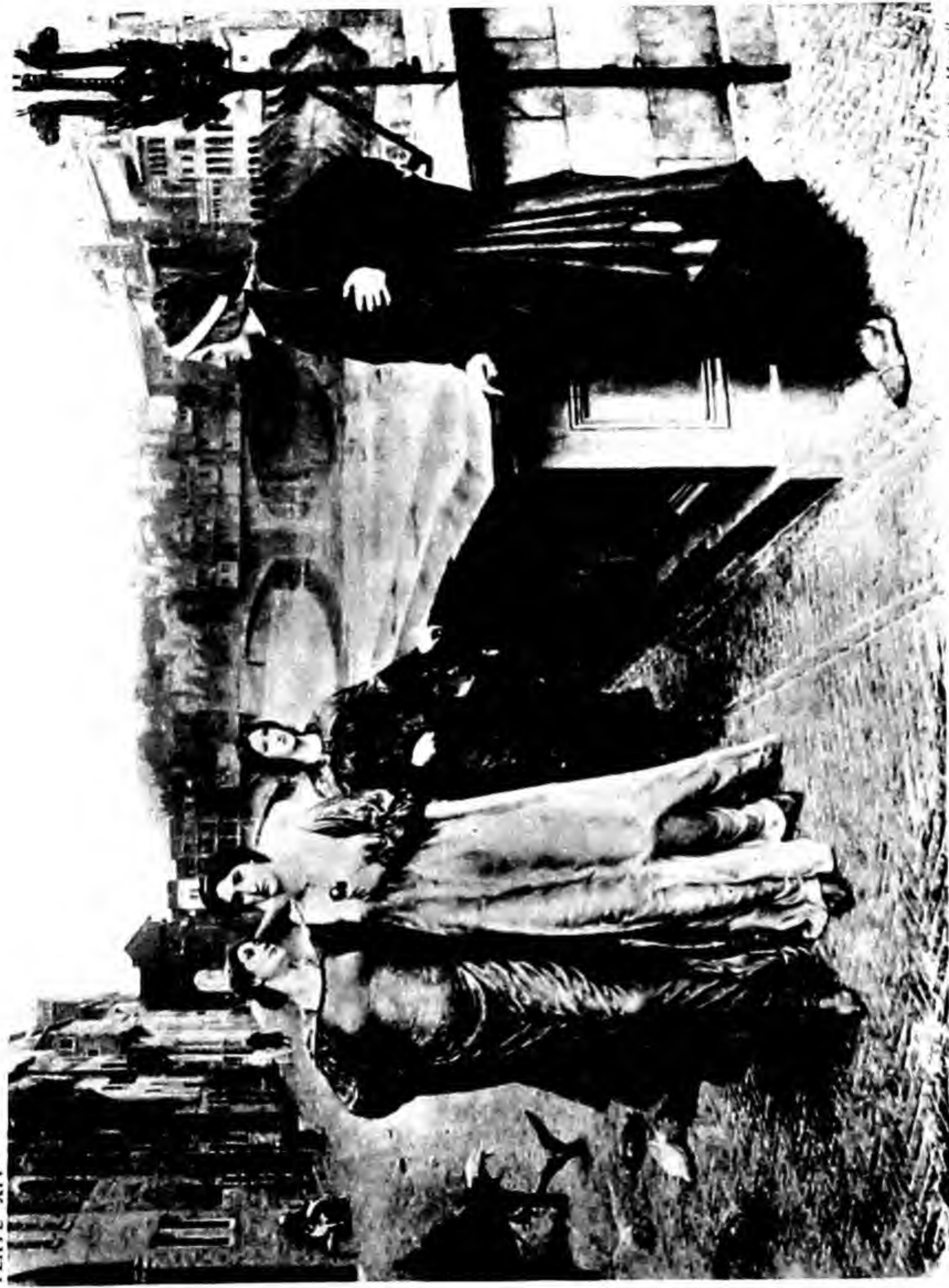
The names of the Fates were Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos. The first spun the fates of men, the second apportioned them, and the third cut them off.





W. F. Mansell

"ÆNEAS AT DELOS," BY CLAUDE  
National Gallery, London



*Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Liverpool*

*W. F. Mansell*

"THE MEETING OF DANTE AND BEATRICE," BY HENRY HOLIDAY





W. F. Mansell

"CHAUCER AT THE COURT OF EDWARD III," BY FORD MADOX BROWN  
Tate Gallery, London

Chaucer entered the royal service soon after he was twenty, and from then until the death of the King his life was spent in diplomatic missions abroad and in attendance at court.



*Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the Tate Gallery*

### "DON QUIXOTE," BY DAUMIER

Don Quixote, the knight-hero of Cervante's great story, and his squire Sancho Panza are almost legendary figures. When, in the early nineteenth century, the French Romantic artists turned to literature for their subjects, Daumier made a number of pictures of the Don. This work, which was once in the Tate Gallery and is now in the Hugh Lane Collection, Dublin, catches the spirit of Cervantes' book: the knight charging into the empty valley, his servant monumentally static behind.



writers, and the style of the Scriptures seemed to him rough and uncouth. Christ reproached him in a dream for preferring to be a Ciceronian than a Christian, and he resolved to devote the rest of his life to the study of the sacred books. The result was his famous translation of the Bible into Latin. With the help of Jewish scholars he translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew. He translated part of the Apocrypha from Chaldee and the New Testament, of course, from Greek. St. Jerome's version, known as the Vulgate, is still to the Roman Catholic Church the authorised version of the Scriptures, though it was considerably changed in later ages. St. Jerome died in 420. He was a voluminous writer and a man of most difficult temper, "always preferring an opinion to a friend."

## § 2

## ST. AUGUSTINE

St. Augustine was born in 354. The capture of Rome by Alaric in 410 inspired his *The City of God*, in which he declared: "The greatest city of the world has fallen in ruin, but the City of God abideth for ever." St. Augustine lives in literary history mainly as the author of the *Confessions*, which have a human interest equal to that of the self-revelations of Bunyan and Rousseau. St. Augustine was born at a village in North Africa. His father was a Pagan, his mother, Monica, a devout Christian. He was educated at Carthage, and afterwards became a professor of literature and oratory. He lived the ordinary life of a well-educated and well-to-do young man of the times, afterwards recalling the sins of his youth with the same bitter exaggeration that one finds in Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*. For years tried he to find rest and explanation in the various ancient philosophical systems, finally becoming a convert to Christianity in Milan, where he had been appointed to the chair of rhetoric. His mother had come from Africa to join him, and after his baptism they started to return to Africa, Augustine intending to lead a life of ascetic devotion. They stayed for a night or two at Ostia, the port of Rome, and here Monica fell ill and died.

The relations between mother and son have remained a treasure of the Church. Augustine wrote of his mother's "slavery" to him, declaring that she was "twice my mother: in the flesh that I might be born into earthly light, in heart that I might be born into light eternal." After his mother's death St. Augustine stayed for a year in Rome, and then returned home, soon to be appointed Bishop of Hippo.

He was the most voluminous writer of his time, being the author, it is said, of no fewer than 230 books, in addition to innumerable homilies.

Augustine was an artist as well as a saint. He loved beauty, he joyed



in music, and, indeed, he frequently accuses himself of being too much affected by æsthetic pleasure. His *Confessions* are obviously sincere. Their human value lies in the fact that they are an unvarnished picture of the inner life of a very real man. St. Augustine remains the most authoritative of all the Fathers of the Church, and there is a wider interest in him for, ascetic though he was, he was also a man. He says :

There were other things which in them did more take my mind ; to talk and jest together, to do kind offices by turns ; to read together honied books ; to play the fool or be earnest together ; to dissent at times without discontent, as a man might with his own self ; and even with the seldomness of these dissentings, to season our more frequent consentings ; sometimes to teach, and sometimes learn ; long for the absent with impatience ; and welcome the coming with joy. These and the like expressions, proceeding out of the hearts of those that loved and were loved again, by the countenance, the tongue, the eyes, and a thousand pleasing gestures, were so much fuel to melt our souls together, and out of many make but one.

This is it that is loved in friends ; and so loved, that a man's conscience condemns itself, if he love not him that loves him again, or love not again him that loves him, looking for nothing from his person, but indications of his love. Hence that mourning, if one die, and darkening of sorrows, that steeping of the heart in tears, all sweetness turned to bitterness ; and upon the loss of life of the dying, the death of the living.

The *Confessions* abound in vivid imagery, and with phrases that have passed into all European languages, such as "the bitter bit," and "life of my life."

The literary tradition founded in the Church by St. Jerome and St. Augustine was never quite lost. Reference has already been made to St. Benedict, who, a hundred years after St. Augustine's death, taught his monks to study and to preserve and copy the ancient manuscripts. St. Columba, the Apostle of Caledonia, was another literary monk of the early Middle Ages. In his *Books and their Makers in the Middle Ages*, Mr. George Haven Putnam says :

According to one of the stories, Columba journeyed to Ossory in the southwest to visit a holy and very learned recluse, a doctor of laws and philosophy, named Longarad. Columba asked leave to examine the doctor's books, and when the old man refused, the monk burst out in an imprecation : "May thy books no longer do thee any good, neither to them who come after thee, since thou takest occasion by them to show thine inhospitality." The curse was heard, and after Longarad died, his books became unintelligible. An author of the sixth century says that the books still existed, but that no man could read them.

Another story speaks of Columba's undertaking, while visiting his ancient master Finnian, to make a clandestine and hurried copy of the abbot's Psalter. He shut himself up at night in the church where the Psalter was deposited, and the light needed for his nocturnal work radiated from his left hand while he



wrote with the right. A curious wanderer, passing the church, was attracted by the singular light, and looked in through the keyhole, and while his face was pressed against the door his eye was suddenly torn out by a crane which was roosting in the church. The wanderer went with his story to the abbot, and Finnian, indignant at what he considered to be a theft, claimed from Columba the copy which the monk had prepared, contending that a copy made without permission ought to belong to the owner of the original, on the ground that the transcript is the offspring of the original work. As far as I have been able to ascertain, this is the first instance which occurs in the history of European literature of a contention for copyright. Columba refused to give up his manuscript, and the question was referred to King Diarmid, or Dermott, in the palace of Tara. The King's judgment was given in a rustic phrase which has passed into a proverb in Ireland: "To every cow her calf, and consequently to every book its copy."

Despite the enthusiasm of scholarly churchmen, after the death of St. Augustine there was no outstanding event in literary history for seven hundred years.

A fascinating phenomenon in those dark ages was the appearance in the tenth century of Roswitha, a nun in the great abbey of Gandersheim in Saxony, who wrote for the amusement and edification of her sister-nuns a series of delightful plays. She was one of the learned women of a time when Europe outside the religious houses was sunk in ignorance. We hear of her travelling to Cordova in Spain to study at the centre of Moslem learning there. Her plays, she says, were based on Plautus, but they are highly individual and were a wonderful "false dawn" of the drama of the new learning. The MSS. were discovered at Ratibon in the fifteenth century and printed. They have been translated into English by Christopher St. John.

## § 3

## THE NIBELUNGENLIED

The German "Iliad"—the *Nibelungenlied*—is the treasure-house in which Wagner found the stories of his music-dramas.

"The *Nibelungenlied*, preserved in ten complete and twenty incomplete manuscripts, took its final shape in south-east Germany about 1200. It is a strange mixture of history, magic, and myth," says Gilbert Waterhouse.

A twelfth-century German poet, whose name is unknown, gathered together the primitive hero-stories of the Northern peoples, sung round camp-fires probably long before the art of writing was known, just as, centuries before, Homer had collected the myths and legends of the ancient Greeks. The unnamed poet called his stories the *Nibelungenlied*, the



Song of the People of the Mist—in short, the Dead ; and these folk-stories are still regarded by the Germans with the same veneration as the Greeks had for the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Just as the Homeric stories were the subjects of the great Greek tragedies, so the *Nibelungenlied* finds a permanent place in modern art in Wagner's music-dramas.

The story of the *Nibelungenlied* is told in thirty-nine adventures. It begins with the coming of the hero Siegfried, the son of Siegmund, king of the Netherland, to Worms to woo the peerless beauty Kriemhild, the sister of King Günther of Burgundy.

Now Siegfried had had strange adventures in his youth, when he had been apprenticed to a swordsmith. He had slain a dragon and bathed in its blood, so that he was completely invulnerable, save where a leaf of the linden had stuck between his shoulders during the bathing. This was his Achilles heel. He had also acquired the sword Balmung, of wondrous potency, a Tarnkappe or cloak of invisibility which also gave him the strength of twelve strong men, a divining rod which gave him power over everyone, and, lastly, the Hoard of the Nibelungs (a mythical mass of gold and precious stones) and, with it, the overlordship of the dwarf Alberich and all his myrmidons.

So when King Günther decides to voyage to Isenland and win for himself, if that may be, the beautiful but wayward Queen Brunhild, Siegfried goes with him in the guise of his vassal on the understanding that he is to have Kriemhild to wife if he helps Günther to achieve the perilous adventure. This Brunhild, as we know from the more primitive form of the Siegfried story used in Wagner's operas, is really a Valkyr or warrior, whose vocation it is to lead the Pagan heroes from their last battlefield into Valhalla, and she could only give herself in love to a mortal at the cost of her immortality. In the later, milder version presented in the "lay," she is a maiden of flesh and blood with certain preternatural gifts, and he who would wed her must beat her at hurling the spear, leaping, and throwing the stone.

With the help of Siegfried in his cloak of invisibility and with his strength multiplied by wearing it, Günther—"he only acting the gestures"—vanquishes the wonder-maiden, and she goes to Worms, where the two bridal-feasts are celebrated with astounding splendour. But on her wedding-night the terrible Brunhild, thanks to her magical maiden-might (last relic of her primitive godhead !), ties Günther hard and fast, hand and foot, in her girdle, and hangs him up on a nail in the wall. Siegfried again helps Günther, and once Brunhild ceases to be a maiden all her strength is gone ; Siegfried takes as his prize the fierce virgin's ring and girdle, which he presents to his own loving wife. Years of high enterprise and joyous living (with the help of the Hoard of the Nibelungs) go by, and there is only one little cause of trouble—Queen Brunhild's notion that Siegfried is



only Günther's vassal, and that she is Queen Kriemhild's superior. In the Fourteenth Adventure—"How the two Queens rated one another"—the fatal secret is revealed. Siegfried, with his wife and his kingly father, with a great train of Nibelungen Ritters and Netherlanders, comes to a feast at Worms, and all goes well till Brunhild and Kriemhild take to arguing about the relative merits of their husbands, which ends in the former's assertion at the door of the Minster, when she overtakes the latter with her far more magnificent retinue, that "before King's wife shall vassal's wife never go." Then the secret came out like a lightning flash :

Then said the fair Kriemhilde. Right angry was her mood :  
 "Couldst thou but hold thy peace. It were surely for thy good :  
 Thyself has all polluted With shame thy fair bodye.  
 How can a concubine By right a King's wife be ? "

In proof of which she produces the ring and the girdle, and Brunhild bursts into tears, afterwards deeply pondering how she can take vengeance for so black an injury to her pride.

She persuades the grim warrior Hagen to be the minister of her revenge. He wheedles from Kriemhild the secret that Siegfried has the one vulnerable spot between his shoulders, and the hero is treacherously killed while he is hunting. Then, that her humiliation may be complete, Kriemhild is persuaded to send for the Nibelungen Hoard, which is at once stolen by Hagen, and Siegfried's widow is left penniless and sorrowful for thirteen years. Then King Etzel sends from his far country to ask for her hand, and she accepts him, hoping that a new marriage may give her the power to hit back at her rival, Brunhild.

Years pass again and Kriemhild sends an invitation to Günther and his champions to visit her husband's court. Hagen at once realises the reason for the invitation, and tries to persuade the king not to make the journey, but he is overruled. Weird omens meet them on the way which Hagen, now grown old and reckless, treats with the scorn of desperation—"mixed was his hair with the grey colour, his limbs massy, and menacing his look"—but he has no fear : with his staunch companion Volker, with his "steel fiddle-bow," he is confident he can still beat strange music from the helms of his foes.

King Etzel, who knows nothing of Kriemhild's plan of vengeance, receives the strangers with joy and hospitality, but the trouble starts as soon as they appear at the royal feast. Hagen's swift reply to Kriemhild's provocation is to hew off the head of her and Etzel's son, making it bound into his mother's lap. Kriemhild is like a fury, and a great fight begins. Carlyle has described it in vivid sentences that are all his own :

Host after host, as they enter that huge vaulted Hall, perish in conflict with



the doomed Nibelungen ; and ever after the terrific uproar, ensues a still more terrific silence. All night and through morning it lasts. They throw the dead from the windows ; blood runs like water ; the Hall is set fire to, they quench it with blood, their own burning thirst they slake with blood. It is a tumult like the Crack of Doom, a thousand-voiced, wild-stunning hubbub ; and frightful like a Trump of Doom, the *Sword-fiddlebow* of Volker, who guards the door, makes music to that death-dance. Nor are traits of heroism wanting, and thrilling tones of pity and love ; as in the act of Rudiger, Etzel's and Kriemhild's champion, who, bound by oath, "lays his soul in God's hand," and enters the Golgotha to die fighting against his friends ; yet first changes shields with Hagen, whose own, also given him by Rudiger in a far other hour, had been shattered in the fight. "When he so lovingly bade him give the shield, there were eyes enough red with hot tears ; it was the last gift which Rudiger of Becharen gave to any Recke. As grim as Hagen was, and as hard of mind, he wept at the gift which this hero good, so near his last times, had given him ; full many a noble Ritter began to weep."

At last Volker is slain ; they are all slain, save only Hagen and Günther, faint and wounded, yet still unconquered among the bodies of the dead. Dietrich the wary, though strong and invincible, whose Recken too, except old Hildebrand, he now finds are all killed, though he had charged them strictly not to mix in the quarrel, at last arms himself to finish it. He subdues the two wearied Nibelungen, binds them, delivers them to Kriemhild ; "and Herr Dietrich went away with weeping eyes, worthily from the heroes." These never saw each other more. Kriemhild demands of Hagen where the Nibelungen Hoard is. But he answers her, that he has sworn never to disclose it while any of her brothers live. "I bring it to an end," said the infuriated woman ; orders her brother's head to be struck off, and holds it up to Hagen. "Thou hast known it now according to thy will," said Hagen ; "of the Hoard knoweth none but God and I ; from thee, she-devil (*valendinne*), shall it for ever be hid." She kills him with his own sword, once her husband's ; and is herself struck dead by Hildebrand, indignant at the woe she has wrought ; King Etzel, there present, not opposing the deed. Whereupon the curtains drop over that wild scene ; "the full highly honoured were lying dead ; the people all had sorrow and lamentation ; in grief had the king's feast ended, as all love is wont to do."

Nothing is clear or coherent in the *Nibelungenlied*. It is an antique tapestry shaken by the wind. But its stark heroes, its fierce queens, are bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. As Carlyle said : "The city of Worms, had we a right imagination, ought to be as venerable to us moderns as any Thebes or Troy was to the ancients."

At this point it is not irrelevant to mention the Eddas (or Poems) and Sagas (or Tales) of mediæval Iceland. "The Poetic" or "Elder Edda" consists of poems collected in the twelfth century, although they probably belong to the ninth and tenth centuries ; they deal with mythical Scandinavian heroes. "The Prose" or "Younger Edda," written in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, likewise deals, in the main, with Scandinavian mythology ; attached to this portion are the rules and theory



of ancient Scandinavian verse. The Sagas, also belonging to the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, are prose narratives of Scandinavian—especially of Icelandic—history, whether traditional or legendary. Two of them appear in Everyman's Library: *The Story of Burnt Njal* and *The Grettir Saga*. They, like the Eddas, fascinate many readers—by their own strangeness combined with simplicity.

A more everyday, realistic note pervades the saga of the North Sea coast: *Gudrun*, which centres in Gudrun, king's daughter. This saga is much more coherent than—and, in literary merit, second only to—the *Nibelungenlied*. There are others. "The rapid accumulation of these Germanic sagas in a written, poetic form is one of the chief literary events of the early thirteenth century" (Gilbert Waterhouse).

During the seventh and eighth centuries the Saxon invasions of Britain brought this heroic literature to our shores, or at least established a common heritage between Northern Europe and Britain where it met the stream of Celtic literature introduced by the Irish missionaries, for Ireland, remote from the invasions, was in the eighth century the centre of European Christian culture.

We have certain delightful fragments of lyric poetry, such as the famous *Widsith*, supposed to be told by a wandering poet, and *Deor*, a lament of the woes of the time. They are the true beginnings of English poetry.

Most important, however, was the 4000-line epic of *Beowulf*. It tells of the three great adventures of the hero dragon-slayer: his killing of the monster, Grendel, then of Grendel's mother who dwelt in the fens, and last of the slaying of a fire-drake by which he himself was killed. *Beowulf* was a king who claims to have ruled justly, and the scenes of the fights and the capture of the treasures are interspersed with the morality of courage, freedom, and justice of this heroic age. The MS. of this great epic poem is in the British Museum, and the poem itself stands as the most splendid monument of Anglo-Saxon poetry.

Alongside it one must put the Christian poetry of Cynewulf and Caedmon which also dates from the seventh and eighth centuries. Caedmon was a cow-herd at Whitby Abbey, and Bede, the first great historian, tells how in a dream the shy unlettered Caedmon was inspired to sing of the Creation. This body of Anglo-Saxon poetry must be set against the Latin literature written by such scholars as the Venerable Bede himself, and the lyrists of the end of the Dark Ages.

Mention must also be made of the great Finnish epic, *Kalevala*. The great folk-poem was first made generally known in 1835 when Elias Lönnrot of Helsinki published as one result of his researches into the ancient songs and poetry of Karelia. The metre which he used was that subsequently used by Longfellow for "*Hiawatha*." This long poem of thirty-two parts,



each containing hundreds of verses, is still not sufficiently known outside Finland. Its stories of heroes and of magic belong to pre-history ; its language, rich and flexible, is singularly wealthy in its imagery ; its love of nature, its humanity and drama make it worthy to stand beside the *Nibelungenlied* in Northern European literature.

## § 4

## THE TROUBADOURS

During the Moorish occupation, there grew up in Spain a life of gaiety and courtesy for courtesy's sake, and the lute and mandolin music, which was its joyous accompaniment, crossed the Pyrenees, reaching Provence and Languedoc first of all, then Sicily and Italy, and finally filling all Western Europe with wandering Troubadours and Minnesingers. The roving minstrel who sang in the vernacular and besought his hearers to listen to a tale, "which is merryr than the nightengale," was the pioneer of all the romantic and sentimental literature of modern Europe.

Some of the Troubadours were nobles and princes, among them our own Richard Cœur-de-Lion, who wrote verses in both the *langue d'oc* and the *langue d'oïl*, the two dialects of mediæval French, and who has left one poem of genuine beauty, written while he was imprisoned by the Duke of Austria on his way home from the Crusade.

The reign of the Troubadours lasted about two centuries ; it nearly coincides with the eleventh and twelfth centuries. A host of fantastic legends is recalled by the names of the Troubadours ; their passion scaled the heights of Southern society, lofty princesses accepting their hearts as oblations to beauty. Some of them were gallant Crusaders ; many became monks when the love-time was over for ever. Perhaps the most romantic figure of all was Jaufré Rudel, whose soul ever turned to Melisande, the Lady of Tripoli.

It must not be forgotten that the Troubadour, even if he came of lowly origin, was always a lordly person—ennobled by his poetical gift beyond every ungifted noble. Writers of modern romance have confused him with the *Jongleur* or musician who accompanied with lute or mandolin.

The Trouvères, or court poets, who flourished in Northern and Central France during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, are a minor poetic influence in comparison with the Troubadours. They were not lovers singing to their lady-loves at the height of their age ; no legends have gathered about their names, and they pass like phantoms across the history of a land more interested in politics and war than in poetry. They were pedants of a sentimentality which seems cold and remote from life in



comparison with the passion of the Southern singers. Nevertheless this Northern cult was one of the minor influences which refined conduct and enforced the ideal of chivalry. They, like the Troubadours, were pioneers of literature.

The most famous of the romances in verse that were recited by the wandering mediæval minstrels is *The Song of Roland*, in which an unknown eleventh-century poet tells, with fine dramatic simplicity, the story of a great fight in a pass in the Pyrenees between the army of Charlemagne and the Saracens of Saragossa. Charlemagne, with his main army, deceived by the Saracens, has crossed the mountains back into France, leaving Roland with the rearguard to hold the pass. Roland is treacherously attacked by the Saracens, aided by recreant Christian knights, and after a mighty struggle he is killed, with the whole of his army.

Among French stories of a rather later time, the most interesting is *Aucassin and Nicolette*, which belongs to the thirteenth century. It is a love romance written partly in prose and partly in verse.

## § 5

## DANTE

There is no more magnificent personage in the whole pageant of literature than Dante—the tall, spare man with his long, grey robes, his red head-dress with the laurel leaves about it, and his sorrowful aquiline face, whose figure is as familiar to us as the figure of Shakespeare himself. We know little of the personal life of Shakespeare, and that little can hardly be called romantic, but we have the details of the life of Dante, and he is the hero of one of the strangest and most beautiful love stories in the world.

Dante was born in Florence in 1265. When he was nine he met Beatrice, a child of the same age. The children did not speak, but the poet declares that “from that day forward love quite governed my soul.” Beatrice remained for him for ever “the glorious lady of my mind,” and years afterwards he recalled that on the most wonderful day of his life she wore a dress “of a most noble colour, a subdued and goodly crimson, girdled and adorned in such sort as best suited with her very tender age.” Nine years passed and the poet met Beatrice again, dressed in white, and walking with two older ladies in the streets of Florence. Again they did not speak, but “she turned her eyes thither where I stood sorely abashed, and by her unspeakable courtesy she saluted me with so virtuous a bearing that I seemed then and there to behold the very limits of blessedness.” He only saw Beatrice once more. How pathetic and how ironic it is that Beatrice never knew of the deep passion that she had inspired in the greatest heart

that ever beat in Italy, a passion immortalised in one of the supreme master-pieces of literature.

Beatrice married and died when she was thirty-five. Writing after her death Dante said : " When I had lost the first delight of my soul (that is Beatrice) I remained so pierced with sadness that no comfort availed me anything." The story of his passion is told in his first notable Italian book *La Vita Nuova*—a philosophical treatise interspersed with sonnets. The following is Rossetti's translation of one of the most beautiful of these sonnets in which Dante explains the reason of his lady's early death :

Such an exceeding glory went up hence  
That it woke wonder in the Eternal Sire,  
Until a sweet desire  
Entered Him for that lovely excellence,  
So that He bade her to Himself aspire ;  
Counting this weary and most evil place  
Unworthy of a thing so full of grace.<sup>1</sup>

After the *Vita Nuova* except for a series of lyrics Dante wrote nothing in his own language until he began *The Divine Comedy*. The Latin works which occupied the interregnum need not concern us. The great work of his life was his tribute to the woman whom he loved. Dante's *Divine Comedy* was written for the dead Beatrice. In the last chapter of the *Vita Nuova* he says :

If it be His pleasure through whom is the life of all things that my life continue with me a few years, it is my hope that I shall yet write concerning her what hath not before been written of any woman. After which it may seem good unto Him who is the master of grace that my spirit should go hence to behold the glory of its lady, to wit, Beatrice.

Two years after the death of Beatrice the poet married a lady of noble birth whose fidelity and strength of character in times of trouble were outweighed by a violence of temper which became not the least of the troubles of a tragically troubled and disappointed life. It is supposed that the poet was referring to his own wife, Gemma, when he wrote in the sixteenth canto of the "*Inferno*" :

Me, my wife  
Of savage temper, more than aught beside,  
Hath to this evil brought.

It is impossible to understand Dante without some idea of the setting of his life. He is the bridge between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. He was born in the mediæval golden age having as contemporaries Roger Bacon, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Louis of France. Giotto, the great

<sup>1</sup> *Vita Nuova* (Rossetti's translation).



mediæval painter, was his companion and friend. The fact that Dante was the first great Italian writer who wrote in his own language has caused him to be regarded as the forerunner of the Renaissance. But *The Divine Comedy* is the incarnation of all that is most splendid and wonderful in mediæval Catholicism. In it the reader finds the quintessence of the philosophy, theology, and the chivalry of the Middle Ages. The scheme of the poem is even more grandiose than the scheme of the *Iliad*; the nobility of its conception and the amazing variety of its characters have no parallel in literature. The wealth of its imagery may be realised in the English translations, but, alas! the beauty of the verse is naturally lost. Just as Shakespeare has no peer among later English writers, so Dante stands supreme in the literature of Italy. But he is far more than an Italian figure; he belongs to Europe, and he and his work are the crown and the climax of the Middle Ages.

Unfortunately for his happiness, while still a young man Dante became involved in the intrigues of Florentine politics, in the feud between the two parties, the Guelphs and Ghibellines. The first were the adherents of the Papal power, and the second supported the authority of the Emperor, a German prince living in Vienna, who claimed sovereignty in Italy. It is sufficient to note that Dante, after facing both ways for some years, espoused the cause of the Emperor, and that the Guelphs having triumphed, he was banished from Florence in 1302, and remained in exile until he died in 1321, wandering from city to city, travelling certainly as far as Paris, and even, according to tradition, to Oxford. For the most part he lived unhappily in various Italian cities and *The Divine Comedy* was probably written in Verona and Ravenna.

Interspersed among the supernatural incidents of *The Divine Comedy* there are constant references to events in the poet's own life—not only to his one absorbing and inspiring passion, but also to the political conflicts and feuds in which he had been concerned.

*The Divine Comedy* is a description of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory. Literally, it is a vision of the state of souls after death; allegorically, it is a demonstration of man's need of spiritual illumination and guidance.

Before we take our way with Dante through the zones of Hell, there are two things to keep in mind; first, that the "Inferno" is, apart from other things, the greatest adventure-story in the world; and, secondly, that it is made alive and real with vivid, graphic details, like those of *Robinson Crusoe* or *Gulliver's Travels*. To exemplify the kind of thing we mean, let us take a single instance, as a type of what the reader of the poem meets at every step—an example which was used by Ruskin to illustrate the shaping power of intense imagination to body forth the forms of things unknown: "Dante's Centaur, Chiron, dividing his beard with his arrow before he

can speak, is a thing no mortal would ever have *thought* of. But the real living Centaur actually trotted across Dante's brain, and he saw him do it."

Such things, of course, are lost in an epitome. But, even so, the great sights of the "Inferno" stand out like pictures, and remain in the mind's eye, an unforgettable series of stupendous scenes.

The shape of Hell is that of an enormous pit, like an inverted cone, whose point is at the centre of the earth, while its sides are occupied by broad steps or ledges, one below the other, and of course diminishing in size as they descend, the most guilty sinners being lowest down.

Dante, having lost his way in a gloomy forest, is met by Virgil, who promises to show him the punishments of Hell. Following Virgil, he comes to the gate of the Inferno, where, after having read the dreadful words that are written thereon—"All hope abandon, ye who enter here"—they both enter. Just within the entrance comes a dark plain, the vestibule of Hell, in which are the Spirits of the Selfish and the Idle, the Giddyaimless, stung by wasps and hornets, and running for ever behind a whirling flag.

Then, crossing the plain, they arrive at the River Acheron, the Stream of Sorrow. There are the crowds at Charon's ferry, "staying for waftage," and the fierce old man with eyes like wheels of flame, who ferries them across. Dante falls into a trance of terror from which, being roused by a clap of thunder, he finds that they have crossed the river. Thence they descend into Limbo, the first circle of Hell. There he finds the souls of the great Pagans, who, though they lived nobly, were unbaptised. Homer, Horace, Ovid, welcome Dante as one of themselves.

Coming into the second circle of Hell, Dante at the entrance beholds Minos, the Infernal Judge, an enormous man-faced dog. Here he witnesses the punishment of guilty lovers, blown like cranes upon a mighty wind.

Now 'gin the rueful wailings to be heard.  
Now am I come where many a plaining voice  
Smites on mine ear. Into a place I came  
Where light was silent all. Bellowing there groan'd  
A noise, as of a sea in tempest torn  
By warring winds. The stormy blast of hell  
With restless fury drives the spirits on,  
Whirl'd round and dash'd amain with sore annoy  
When they arrive before the ruinous sweep,  
There shrieks are heard, there lamentations, moans,  
And blasphemies 'gainst the good Power in heaven.

There they saw Semiramis and Cleopatra, and :

There mark'd I Helen, for whose sake so long  
The time was fraught with evil ; there the great  
Achilles, who with love fought to the end.



Paris I saw, and Tristan ; and beside,  
A thousand more he show'd me, and by name  
Pointed them out, whom love bereaved of life.

Above all, there is Francesca of Rimini and her lover Paolo, whose story he has made immortal. This story, which she tells to Dante—how they were surprised and slain together by her husband, John the Lamè, a lord of Rimini—makes him faint with pity.

When he recovers he finds himself in the third circle, where the gluttons lie in mire under a continual rain of hail, snow, and filthy water, while Cerberus, the gigantic dog, barks, snarls, and rends them. At the beginning of the fourth circle he sees Plutus, god of riches, guarding the circle of the spendthrifts and the misers, who spend their time in rolling mighty crags to crash against each other ; and farther on, the Styx, the awful marsh in which the Sullen writhe like eels, and in whose dark waters fight the Spirits of the Angry.

Now seest thou, son !

The souls of those whom anger overcame.  
This too for certain know, that underneath  
The water dwells a multitude, whose sighs  
Into these bubbles make the surface heave,  
As thine eye tells thee wheresoe'er it turn.  
Fixed in the slime, they say : " Sad once were we,  
In the sweet air made gladsome by the sun,  
Carrying a soul and lazy mist within :  
Now in these murky settlements are we sad."  
Such dolorous strain they gurgle in their throats,  
But word distinct can utter none.

They come at last to the base of a lofty tower, from which shine two signal-flames ; and now they behold Phlegyas, the ferryman of the lake, coming with angry speed to convey them to the other side. Through the grim vapour are seen glowing, red with fire, the towers and pinnacles of Satan's City of Dis. The gates are guarded by a horde of demons ; upon the battlements the blood-stained Furies tear the serpents of their hair, shrieking for Medusa to turn the pilgrims into stone. A rapt, disdainful Angel, who speeds dry-footed across the lake, scatters these monsters from the pathway, and the two poets, entering the city, find a great plain rough with lidless sepulchres, each filled with fire and holding the tormented spirit of a heretic in a red-hot bed. From one of these the proud spirit of Farinata lifts his head, " looking as if he entertained great scorn of Hell."

Descending into the seventh circle, by a wild chasm of shattered rocks, they come to the river of blood, in which stand the Tyrants, while troops of Centaurs, with Chiron at their head, gallop up and down the bank and shoot the Sinners with their arrows. Still in the seventh circle, they enter

the dismal wood of the Self-murderers, whose spirits have become rough stunted trees, with poisoned fruit on which feed the Harpies, huge filthy birds with women's faces ; while through this dreadful forest other spirits rush, pursued by hell-hounds. Beyond this wood lies a naked plain of fiery sand, the region of the Violent, under a slow eternal shower of flakes of fire.

Journeying along the bank of the river of blood which crosses the sand, they reach the place where the flood falls in a cataract into a gulf. Virgil, having thrown Dante's girdle into the abyss, they behold at that signal a monstrous and horrible figure coming swimming up through the dark air—it is Geryon.

“ Lo ! the fell monster with the deadly sting  
Who passes mountains, breaks through fenced walls  
And firm embattled spears, and with his filth  
Taints all the world.” Thus me my guide address'd,  
And beckon'd him, that he should come to shore,  
Near to the stony causeway's utmost edge.

Forthwith that image vile of Fraud appear'd,  
His head and upper part exposed on land,  
But laid not on the shore his bestial train.  
His face the semblance of a just man's wore,  
So kind and gracious was its outward cheer ;  
The rest was serpent all : two shaggy claws  
Reach'd to the arm-pits ; and the back and breast,  
And either side, were painted o'er with nodes  
And orbits. Colours variegated more  
Not Turks nor Tartars e'er on cloth of state  
With interchangeable embroidery wove,  
Nor spread Arachne o'er her curious loom.  
As oft-times a light skiff, moor'd to the shore,  
Stands part in water, part upon the land ;  
Or, as where dwells the greedy German boor,  
The beaver settles, watching for his prey ;  
So on the rim, that fenced the sand with rock,  
Sat perch'd the fiend of evil. In the void  
Glancing, his tail upturned its venomous fork,  
With sting like scorpions arm'd.

Descending on the monster's back the poets reach the eighth circle, which is divided into ten gulfs, the place of punishment for divers kinds of Fraud. In the first are the Seducers, scourged by horned demons. In the next are the Flatterers, immersed in filth. Then come the Simonists, set head downwards in deep narrow holes, with feet that burn like lamps above the level of the rock. Then the hordes of the False Prophets, whose necks are twisted round so that they face backwards.



Next comes a dyke of boiling pitch, in which the Spirits of Embezzlers plunge and dive, watched by black-winged demons armed with prongs. This is one of the most vivid scenes in the *Inferno*. The chief of these hobgoblins is named Barbariccia, while under him are Graffiacane, Draghignazzo, Farfarello, and the rest of the foul crew.

As dolphins that, in sign  
To mariners, heave high their arched backs,  
That thence forewarn'd they may advise to save  
Their threaten'd vessel ; so, at intervals,  
To ease the pain, his back some sinner show'd,  
Then hid more nimbly than the lightning glance.

E'en as the frogs, that of a watery moat  
Stand at the brink, with the jaws only out,  
Their feet and of the trunk all else conceal'd,  
Thus on each part the sinners stood ; but soon  
As Barbariccia was at hand, so they  
Drew back under the wave. I saw, and yet  
My heart doth stagger, one, that waited thus,  
As it befalls that oft one frog remains,  
While the next springs away : and Graffiacane,  
Who of the fiends was nearest, grappling seized  
His clotted locks, and dragg'd him sprawling up,  
That he appear'd to me an otter.

Observe the brief sharp touch which brings before the eye the body hauled out of the pitch, black, sleek, and glistening—"like an otter." Two of the demons, fighting for their prey like vultures, drop, locked together, into the seething pitch, and their fellow-goblins have to fish them out, all glued and struggling, with their prongs.

The poets leave them at the task and proceed to the succeeding chasms, where they come upon the Hypocrites weighed down by gilded cowls of lead—the Thieves, who change with agony to serpents and from serpents back to sinners—the Evil Counsellors, each a flame, dancing like strange fireflies in their gloomy gorge—the Traitors and Schismatics, rent with awful wounds, one of whom, who had rebelled against Henry the Second, king of England, holds up by the hair his severed head to talk to Dante.

Thence the poets make their way to the ninth circle. The sound of a great horn, like thunder, strikes their ears, and soon they see three giants standing at the verge of the lowest pit of Hell. One of these, Antæus, sets them down upon the bottom of the gulf, which is a sea of everlasting ice, in which the forms of the tormented appear like flies in crystal. Two of these spirits are frozen in a single hole, and one of them is gnawing like a dog the other's skull. He lifts his teeth to tell his awful story. He is

Ugolino, who was thrown into the Tower of Famine with his sons and left to starve to death. His story of the deaths of his two dying children is one of the most pathetic in the world. His companion in the ice is Archbishop Ruggiere, who had sent them to the Tower.

Thus having spoke,  
Once more upon the wretched skull his teeth  
He fasten'd like a mastiff's 'gainst the bone,  
Firm and unyielding.

And so we come to the last scene of all, the lowest pit of Hell, the Judecca, so called from Judas, the place of the great Betrayers. The Arch-Traitor Satan stands for ever in the centre of it, champing three sinners in his three huge jaws, and sending forth from his vast bat-wings an icy wind that freezes all the sea. Past him, the pilgrims mount through a long steep passage :

. . . By that hidden way  
My guide and I did enter, to return  
To the fair world ; and heedless of repose  
We climb'd, he first, I following his steps,  
Till on our view the beautiful lights of heaven  
Dawn'd through a circular opening in the cave :  
Thence issuing we again beheld the stars.

Leaving the darkness and agonies behind them, they come out at last beside the Hill of Purgatory, under the quiet shining of the stars.

Unlike the conception of other mediæval writers, Dante imagined Purgatory as being in the open air. Round the steep sides of its mountain run seven circles, each of them corresponding to one of the seven deadly sins of the mediæval Church. In the lower terraces are expiated the sins of the spirit, in the fourth terrace sloth, which is a sin both of the spirit and of the flesh, and in the three uppermost terraces the sins of the flesh alone. At the beginning of each terrace instances are given of the virtue of which the sin is the opposite, and at the end of each stands an angel personifying it. Finally, when Dante and his guide have passed the last of the terraces, they enter into the Earthly Paradise where Dante sees the mystical procession representing the triumphant march of the Church, at the end of which on a chariot, amidst a hundred angels singing and scattering flowers, Beatrice appears clad in the mystical colours red, white, and green, and crowned with a wreath of olive leaves, the symbol of wisdom and of peace, over her snow-white veil. At her coming Virgil vanishes to go back to his sad dwelling in the limbo from which he came.

So the reader reaches the "Paradiso," which is the crowning glory of *The Divine Comedy*. Guided by Beatrice the poet passes through nine Heavens, which are moving spheres revolving round our globe, till he



reaches the final motionless and fixed Heaven in the Empyrean. The seven lowest of the Heavens are named after the moon, the sun, and the planets, and the eighth after the fixed stars. All these are visible from earth. Above them is the ninth or crystalline Heaven, which directs by its movements the daily revolution of all the others. In it nature starts ; from it proceed time and motion, together with all celestial influences for the government of the world. It is :

The robe that with its regal folds enwraps  
The world and with the nearer breath of God  
Doth burn and quiver.

Above it, climax of the vision, is the infinite and motionless sea of divine love where God makes blessed the saints and angels in the Vision of His Essence.

The old commentators on Dante have much to say regarding his theology, his metaphysics, his use of allegory, and such matters. Just so the commentators on Virgil in the Middle Ages regarded him, not so much as a great poet as a skilled magician, from whose verses they drew oracles. Just so the early Puritans disputed whether Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress* was a sound exponent of the faith. One sage maintains that Beatrice represents the Church, another that she personifies the love of God. The lover of great poetry merely stops his ears. Sufficient of theory, if we realise that this poem is a bridge between two ages, its conception of *morality* rather than *belief* as the basis of goodness was a forerunner to the new ideas of humanism. The mighty work of Dante should be enjoyed as what it is : a grand and noble poem, a story of immortal joys and sorrows, which has no parallel among the works of men.

"In the Trecento," writes St. John Lucas, "Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio are the pre-eminent types of three aspects in the development of Italian civilisation. Dante exemplifies the religious movement of the time, Petrarch the humanist, and Boccaccio is the realist, the observer of the visible world."

## § 6

### FROISSART'S CHRONICLES

Froissart's *Chronicles of England, France, and Spain* is the outstanding example of the mediæval chronicle, which is the romance of history. Froissart was born in 1338 and spent most of his life wandering from one European court to another, picking up gossip. His chief patron was good Queen Philippa, the wife of Edward III. His chronicle is the history of the fourteenth century, and of the wars between England and France. It

is written, not so much to communicate facts as, in the words of its author, "to encourage all valorous hearts and to show them honourable examples." It is also, in the next degree, a gallery of portraits; limned in their own works and words, their works rather than their words, of the right valiant princes and nobles Sir John Froissart had personally known.

Froissart cared little for the common folk; they finish unlamented by the thousand, but the death of a single knight of known prowess affects him to tears. "His history," says Sir Walter Scott, "has less the air of a narrative than of a dramatic representation. The figures live and move before us; we not only know what they did, but learn the mode and process of the action, and the very words with which it was accompanied. . . . In Froissart, we hear the gallant knights, of whom he wrote, arrange the terms of combat and the manner of the onset; we hear the soldiers cry their war-cries; we see them strike their horses with the spur; and the liveliness of the narration hurries us along with them into the whirlwind of battle."

Perhaps the story of the Count de Foix and his son, Gaston, to whom the King of Navarre gave a little bag of powder, telling him it would reconcile his mother and father if strewn on the latter's meat, is the most terrible example in the book of the mediæval savagery, which so ruthlessly sought its ends under the glittering surface of this chivalrous society. The bag really contained a deadly poison; and the child who tried to starve himself to death, when it was accidentally discovered, died unforgiven—by yet another accident—at the hand of his father.

Froissart was translated in 1523 by a great English translator of Romance, Lord Berners, whose glittering pages "breathe the spirit amid the very air of that age of infinite variety, in which the knight-errant appears side by side with the plundering adventurer, while popular uprisings sound the first note of alarm to feudal oppressors."

Philippe de Commines, minister of that astute monarch Louis XI of France, was an historian of a very different order. His book is the calm judicious record of the reign of his sovereign, who, by patient and cunning statecraft, laid the foundations of modern France.

## § 7

### CHAUCER AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Geoffrey Chaucer, the father of English poetry, was born in 1340. We have seen how the great Greek literature was produced after the victories of Marathon and Salamis, and the great Roman literature at the time of Rome's supreme military glory. Similarly, the first great English poetry



was written, in the age of Crécy and Poitiers, in the century of the military triumphs of Edward III and the Black Prince.

Chaucer's father was a prosperous London vintner. As a young man the poet served with the English army in France, afterwards obtaining a small place at court. He was a man of considerable parts, and was first promoted to a good position in the Custom House, and was later sent on diplomatic missions to France and Italy. In Italy he met the poet Petrarch, and most certainly became acquainted with the stories in Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

Petrarch (1304-1374) and Boccaccio (1313-1375) were the two foremost Italian writers after the death of Dante and before the Renaissance. Petrarch wrote both in Latin and Italian. But it is through his Italian poetry—especially his love poetry, in which he immortalised Laura—that he has an important place in literary history, for his sonnets, *canzoni*, and *trionfi* are immortal: they constitute "the first record of all the secret melancholy of a human soul—a soul . . . possessing all the delicate sensitiveness which we are accustomed to regard as characteristic of modernity" (St. John Lucas): Petrarch was the precursor of Vigny and Musset and Sully Prudhomme in France, of Heine, of Leopardi, and of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Boccaccio, who was a considerable poet, is—outside Italy—remembered almost entirely for his prose, which exercised a Europe-wide influence. He wrote the *Decameron* between the years 1344 and 1350. He was the first great writer of Italian prose, and his stories exactly reflect the nature of the Italian people, its grace and elegance, its naïveté, and what is to the Northerner, its rather cynical coarseness.

Chaucer had evidently not forgotten Boccaccio's stories when he sat down to write *The Canterbury Tales*, though he attained a far greater measure of realism and humanism than his Italian contemporaries. *The Canterbury Tales* begin with a prologue in which are described a number of typical English men and women of the Middle Ages, intent on making a pilgrimage from the Tabard Inn in Southwark to the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury—the Knight, the Prioress, the Miller, the Man of Law, the Parson, the Wife of Bath, and so on. Each character is sketched with masterly skill, and the English reader feels that he is being introduced to actual men and women of his own blood, just as he does when reading Shakespeare or Dickens. There was no class feeling in Merrie England; the Knight of the flower of chivalry hobnobbed happily with the Miller, and the Parson with the Shipman. There is a vast difference between fourteenth and twentieth-century English, and owing to this difference it is probable that Chaucer is read very little nowadays. It may therefore be worth while to quote his description of the nun who was one of the pilgrims who journeyed to the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury. The spelling and some of the words have an unfamiliar appearance, but there is no

difficulty in understanding the lines, and if they are read aloud there is no chance of missing their musical cadence.

Ther was also a Nunne, a Prioressse,  
 That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy  
 Hire gretteste ooth was but by seinté Loy,  
 And she was clepéd madame Eglentyne.  
 Ful weel she soong the servicé dyvyne,  
 Entuned in hir nose ful semely,  
 And French she spak ful faire and fetisly  
 After the scole of Stratford-atté-Bowe,  
 For French of Parys was to hire unknowe.  
 At meté wel y-taught was she with-alle,  
 She leet no morsel from hir lippés falle,  
 Ne wette hir fyngrés in hir saucé depe,  
 Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe,  
 Thát no drope ne fille upon hire breste ;  
 In curtesie was set ful muchel hir leste.  
 Hire over-lippé wypéd she so clene,  
 That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene  
 Of greccé, when she dronken hadde hir draughte  
 Ful semély after hir mete she raughte,  
 And sikerly she was of greet desport,  
 And ful plesáunt and amyable of port,  
 And peynéd hire to countrefeté cheere  
 Of Court, and been estatlich of manere,  
 And to ben holden digne of reverence.  
 But for to speken of hire conscience,  
 She was so charitable and so pitous  
 She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous  
 Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.  
 Of smalé houndés hadde she that she fedde  
 With rosted flessch, or milk and wasted breed ;  
 But sooré wepte she if oon of hem were deed,  
 Or if men smoot it with a yerdé smerte ;  
 And al was conscience and tendré herte.  
 Ful simply hir wympul pynchéd was ;  
 Hire nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas,  
 Hir mouth ful smal and ther-to softe and reed,  
 But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed  
 It was almoost a spannéd brood I trowe  
 For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.  
 Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war  
 Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar  
 A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,  
 And ther-on heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,  
 On which ther was first write a crownéd A,  
 And after *Amor vincit omnia*.



It has become a common English saying that the average Englishman can speak French after the "scole of Stratford-atté-Bowe," and this is perhaps the only common expression of modern English that dates back to the fourteenth century. Goldsmith may have taken his idea of the village clergyman, "passing rich on forty pounds a year," from Chaucer's "Poor Parson of a Town":

He waited after no pompe and reverence,  
Ne maked him a spiced conscience,  
But Cristés loore, and his Apostles twelve,  
He taughte, but first he folwed it hym selve.

After the Prologue, Chaucer relates the stories that each of the pilgrims tells: the Knight an old romance, the Prioress a legend of Our Lady, the Priest a ghost-story, and the Wife of Bath, a lady who had had as many husbands as the woman of Samaria, a romantic tale of Sir Gawaine and his bride. The stories are in every mood—comic and sentimental, grave and gay, and are told with immense spirit and skill.

Chaucer died in 1400. In his day educated people in England still spoke French and English, and Chaucer's great service to English literature is that his success as an English poet made it impossible for any later Englishman to write in a language not his own.

Contemporary with Chaucer were William Langland, the author of *Piers Plowman*, who was born in Oxfordshire in 1332; and John Gower, who died in 1408 and was buried in St. Saviour's Church, Southwark, and whose *Pyramus and Thisbe* was acted by Nick Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *Piers Plowman* describes the misery of the common people caused by the ceaseless and senseless wars that ravaged Western Europe in Chaucer's century, the obverse side of the glory of the third Edward.

## § 8

### MALORY'S MORTE D'ARTHUR

During the later centuries of the Middle Ages that heralded the Renaissance, Europe was stirred to a joyous awakening, the immediate result of which was a riot of romance-writing, and by good fortune we have a book in our own language that is the sum and symbol of all this splendid activity. Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* is not exactly an original work: it was compiled in the main from French romances. These in their turn, however, had been based on ancient Celtic legends, so that in the Knights of the

Round Table are to be found a company of British heroes comparable to the heroes of classic myth and of the German *Nibelungenlied*.

That Sir Thomas Malory was more than a translator is shown in the fact that the book occupies in English literature a position infinitely higher than its French originals ever held in the literature of France. He is said to have been a Warwickshire gentleman, knighted in 1445, and a Member of Parliament, who was taken captive in the Wars of the Roses, *Le Morte d'Arthur* being partly written in prison. The book was completed by 1470. It was the last important work finished before the introduction of printing, and one of the first printed by Caxton when he set up his press at Westminster.

*Le Morte d'Arthur* is a collection of simply written tales about Arthur, Launcelot, Galahad, Percival, Tristram, and other great figures, their loves and adventures. The book is divided into twenty-one parts, with an infinite number of short chapters. The first part tells legends of the birth and early days of Arthur. One day there suddenly appeared in an English churchyard a huge stone, with a sword embedded in an anvil. Gold letters written on the marble declared that "Whoso pulleth out this sword from this stone and anvil is rightwise king born of all England." Arthur had been sent home from a New Year's tournament to fetch his elder brother's sword, and thinking to save himself the long journey by calling at the churchyard and taking the sword embedded in the stone, he pulled it free and thus became king of England. His accession entailed various adventures, including a stout battle with eleven kings and a great host, against which he "did so marvellously in arms that all men had wonder."

He married the beautiful Guenevere, and lived in splendid state at the city of Carleon in Wales, surrounded by hundreds of knights and beautiful ladies, patterns of valour, breeding, and grace to all the world. The bravest of the knights formed the king's immediate circle, sitting with him at the Round Table, and "pleasing him more than right great riches." From the court of Arthur these knights went forth to all parts in search of adventure—to protect women, chastise oppressors, liberate the enchanted, enchain giants and malicious dwarfs. To read of their exploits is to consort with the greatest lovers the world has known, to enter the many-towered cities of the dreamland of chivalry, "where knights and dames with new and wondrous names go singing down the street." There is the thrilling tale of Sir Gawaine and Gahevis, and how four knights fought against them and overcame them, and how at the last moment their lives were saved at the request of four ladies: the tale of Pellinore, and how a lady desired help of him, and how he fought with two knights for her and slew one of them at the first stroke: the tale of the Lady of the Lake, and how



she saved King Arthur from a mantle which should have burnt him, and how another lady helped La Cote Mail Taile in his fight against a hundred knights by conniving at his escape : of Launcelot's slaughter of a knight "who distressed all ladies, and also a villain that kept the bridge" : and countless others in which love is often as important as valour itself.

The life and exploits of the famous Sir Tristram are described in rich detail, in the middle part of Malory's book. Tristram learned to harp, hawk, and hunt in France, and he makes an auspicious entry into the ranks of English chivalry by taunting two knights of the Round Table until they came at him "as it had been thunder" :

And Sir Dodinas' spear brast (broke) in sunder, but Sir Tristram smote him with a more might, that he smote him clean over the horse-croup, that nigh he had broken his neck. When Sir Sagramore saw his fellow fall he marvelled what knight he might be, and he dressed his spear with all his might, and Sir Tristram against him, and they came together as the thunder, and there Sir Tristram smote Sir Sagramore a strong buffet, that he bare his horse and him to the earth, and in the falling he brake his thigh. When this was done Sir Tristram asked them : "Fair knights, will ye any more ? Be there no bigger knights in the court of King Arthur ?"

After this Sir Tristram had great renown in Arthur's court, for he was ever ready for a "jousting" or a private duel. No sooner had he saved Sir Palomides's life, indeed, than the two are in arms against each other. "Have remembrance of your promise," Sir Tristram says, "that ye had made with me to do battle with me this day fortnight." "I shall not fail you," says Sir Palomides, whereupon "they mounted their horses and rode away together."

With the tale of Tristram and Iseult, the love potion, and King Mark's revenge, we pass on to the Quest of the Holy Grail, or Sangrael, the cup used by Christ when He ordained the Eucharist. This sacred vessel was supposed to have been brought to Glastonbury by Joseph of Arimathea. One night while King Arthur and his court were at supper, there was a sudden thunder, and "a sunbeam more clearer by seven times than ever they saw day," so that all the knights were transfigured, and all the hall was "fulfilled with good odours, and every knight had such meats and drinks as he best loved in this world." The Holy Grail itself had entered among them, covered with white samite. None saw it, nor who carried it. Then as swiftly it departed, and "they wist not where it became" ; whereupon Sir Gawaine and the knights vowed to go in search of it. Miraculous are the happenings which follow, and in the story a new nobility is grafted on to the mingled pathos and comedy of the earlier pages.

Moving majestically by way of Sir Galahad, Sir Bors, and Sir Lionel, the narrative reaches its tragic ending, the inevitable issue of the guilty



loves of Launcelot and Guenevere, the wife of the king, encompassing the death of the deceived King Arthur because, for him, there was no longer "trust for to trust in. For I will into the Vale of Avilion to heal me of my grievous wound. And if thou hear never more of me, pray for my soul."

Though he sinned and was punished, Launcelot remains the ideal figure of chivalry, heightened by the devotion of the lovely Elaine, who died for unrequited love of him. Sir Ector's speech over his wasted body is perhaps the finest passage in the story :

"Ah, Launcelot," he said, "thou wert head of all Christian knights, and now, I dare say," said Sir Ector, "thou Sir Launcelot, there thou liest, that thou wert never matched of earthly knight's hand. And thou wert the courteous knight that ever bare shield. And thou wert the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrad horse. And thou wert the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman. And thou wert the kindest man that ever struck with sword. And thou wert the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights. And thou wert the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies. And thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest."

Linked with the Arthurian legends are the stories in the *Mabinogion*, a collection of Welsh legends from *The Red Book of Hergest*. These were translated into English by Lady Charlotte Guest and first published between 1839 and 1849. The stories they contain are not those of the continental Arthurian cycle ; and, moreover, there are many other distinctively Welsh legends in this greatest of all Welsh prose works.

Welsh literature, however, is chiefly remarkable for its wealth of poetry, especially love poetry. The oldest belongs to the ninth century. *The Book of Aneirin*, of the early thirteenth century, is an important source book with battle and love poetry. Another is *The Book of Taliessen*. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Court poets further cultivated this type of poetry, expressed with terseness and great metrical skill, culminating in the love and nature poetry of Dafydd ab Gwilym, who was followed by many imitators.

The Eisteddfod, or election of the Bards, dating from perhaps the sixth century, greatly encouraged Welsh poetry. The ceremony died out for centuries, but was revived in 1798.

We have seen how the Greek myths supplied the plots of the Athenian tragedies and were repeated by the Roman poets. We have noted how the German myths have been used by the greatest of German creative artists. Similarly the story told by Malory has inspired many English writers. Spenser's *Faerie Queene* owes much to it, and although we have no evidence that Shakespeare even read it, we know that Milton was contemplating an Arthurian epic in 1639. Tennyson in "The Idylls of the King," Swin-



burne in "Tristram of Lyonesse," Morris in "The Defence of Guenevere" and several other poems, and Matthew Arnold in "Tristram and Iseult," were all moved to write great poetry by *Le Morte d'Arthur*; Maurice Hewlett and others drew on it for romantic novels.

No record of mediæval English literature would be complete without reference to the two poems written in the second half of the fourteenth century by a poet whose name we do not know; "The Pearl" and "Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight." "Pearl" is allegorical, and somewhat artificial in its regular metre and alliterative structure, and is probably an elegiac poem lamenting the loss of a beloved child. "Sir Gawayne" is a much freer poem, a delightful picture of romantic mediæval life at the court of King Arthur. Descriptions of dress, customs, and scenery are alike charming, and one description of a foxhunt alone marks this too little known poem as a definite part of our heritage of great poetry. Although we know nothing definite of the author it is fairly certain that he belongs to the Lancashire-Cheshire region.

One other poet of transition between mediæval and renaissance is John Skelton (? 1460-1529) who in the reign of Henry VIII, whose tutor he had been, wrote satirical verse against the great Wolsey, verse of charm such as the "Phyllyp Sparowe" and ribald low-life pieces such as the "Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng." He made brilliant use of a short line metre. An East Anglian, his fame has been revived at the Aldeburgh Festival.

## § 9

## FRANÇOIS VILLON, POET AND THIEF

The literary history of the Middle Ages finishes with François Villon, the unlucky French poet-thief, who was born in 1431. He was a robber and a murderer, his life was spent in the vile Alsatias of Paris, he was frequently imprisoned, only escaping execution as if by a miracle, and at the end he vanished from the scene no one knows how or where. The date of his death is unrecorded, the place of his burial unknown; he is believed to have died in Poitou, about the year 1485.

His first work was *The Little Testament* (a single poem); his masterpiece was *The Big Testament* (or *Will*), written in 1461 and consisting of *ballades* and *rondeaux*.

Villon took the old French poetic forms, the Rondeau, the Rondel, and the Ballade, and gave them new life and new beauty. His verse is instinct with melancholy. He mocks at life, he boasts of his sins, but he writes all the time in the shadow of the gallows, and fear of the horror of death never leaves him. He seems to epitomise the pain and fear of the Middle Ages as Dante epitomises their ideals, and Chaucer their laughter.

Villon's poetry stands as an oasis in the desert of French literature preceding him (dreary, long-winded stuff, for the most part), and following him (artificial conceits and prettinesses) until the arrival (1549) of Ronsard and Du Bellay. His place in literature and the manner of his work have been brilliantly summarised by St. John Lucas, thus : " He came at the most unlikely period, he wrote in the most outworn forms. . . . Yet he has none of the affectations of the ballade-writers, his poems are amazingly original and vivid ; he is eloquent, gay, cynical, pious, scurrilous, and remorseful in turn, and yet never gives us the impression that he is posturing. His predecessors had but one mood, and it was insincere. He has a hundred, but he is convincing in every one of them."

## READING LIST

H. A. Guerber, *Myths and Legends of the Middle Ages* (Harrap).

Thomas Bulfinch, *The Age of Fable* and *The Legends of Charlemagne* are in Everyman's Library.

W. P. Ker, *The Dark Ages*, and F. J. Snell, *The Fourteenth Century*. Both of these volumes are in the series, *Periods of European Literature* (Rivingtons).

Ker's *English Mediæval Literature* in the Home University Library (Williams & Norgate) is excellent.

The English literature of the period : F. J. Snell, *The Age of Transition* (Bell).

*St. Augustine's Confessions* (Pusey's translation) is published in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

Helen Waddell, scholar and imaginative writer, has given us many studies of the period when the Dark Ages were changing to the New Learning. *The Wandering Scholars* is a translation with running commentary of the last Latin lyrics. *Peter Abelard*, a novel on this romantic scholar, gives a picture of life of the period (both Constable).

The *Plays of Hroswitha*, translated by Christopher St. John (Chatto & Windus) contains a scholarly introduction.

George Bell & Sons publish in Bohn's Library *The Lay of the Nibelungs*, metrically translated by Alice Horton and edited by Edward Bell. To this is prefixed *The Essay on the Nibelungenlied*, by Thomas Carlyle.

H. J. Chaytor's *The Troubadours* in the Cambridge Manuals of Science and Literature (Cambridge University Press).

*Aucassin and Nicolette*, translated by E. Mason, is in Everyman's Library. Also his *French Mediæval Romances* in the same edition.

The two best translations of Dante's *Divina Commedia* are those by H. F. Cary in the Oxford Poets and by M. B. Anderson in the World's



Classics (both series : Oxford University Press) ; Laurence Binyon made a translation into triple rhyme, of which the *Paradiso* was published in 1944 (Macmillan). The poetry of the Trecento is majestically summarised by St. John Lucas in his Introduction to *The Oxford Book of Italian Verse*.

Paget Toynbee's *Dante Alighieri* in the Oxford Biographies (Methuen).

Froissart's *Chronicles* (Dent's Everyman's Library).

Petrarch's Sonnets, Triumphs, and other Poems, in Bohn's Library (Bell).

*Forty Novels from the Decameron*, with Introduction by Henry Morley (Routledge).

P. G. Thomas, *English Literature before Chaucer* (Arnold).

Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* in 2 vols. in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

*Mabinogion*, translated by Gwyn and Thomas Jones (Everyman, Dent).

Eugene Vinaver, the editor of a great new edition of *Le Morte d'Arthur* published by the Oxford University Press, has also written a new study : *Malory*. (Oxford University Press).

*Chaucer's Works*. Edited by A. W. Pollard (Macmillan).

*Complete Works of Chaucer*. Edited by Walter W. Skeat (Oxford University Press).

*Chaucer in Modern English* by Nevill Coghill, a version that was broadcast, is published in Penguin.

*John Skelton* : Selection by Vivian De Sola Pinto (Sidgwick & Jackson).

*Chaucer and the 15th Century*. H. C. Bennett (Oxford University Press).

*Chaucer*. (English Men of Letters. Macmillan.)

*Piers Plowman*. Edited by W. W. Skeat (Clarendon Press).

Grace Hadow : *Chaucer* (Home University Library).

*Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight* has recently been charmingly translated into Spenserian stanzas by Kenneth Hare (Eyre and Spottiswoode).

H. de Vere Stacpoole's *François Villon, his Life and Times* (Hutchinson) ; Geoffrey Atkinson, *François Villon* (Heffer) : French text, with prose translation on opposite page, a commentary, and a long biographical and critical introduction.

The historical background may be viewed to advantage in H. W. C. Davis, *Medieval Europe* (Home University Library), in the relevant parts of H. A. L. Fisher, *History of Europe* (Edward Arnold) ; in P. Boissonnade, *Life and Work in Medieval Europe* (Routledge) ; in C. G. Coulton, *The Medieval Scene* (Cambridge University Press) ; in F. P. Barnard, *Mediæval England* (Oxford University Press) ; in S. Runciman, *Byzantine Civilisation* (Arnold) ; and for the Middle Ages it is particularly necessary to form an adequate idea of that background.

The influence of the Middle Ages is shown in *The Legacy of the Middle Ages* (Oxford University Press). See, too, E. Prestage, *Chivalry : its Historical Significance and Civilizing Influence* (Routledge).

## IX

### THE RENAISSANCE

#### § I

##### THE NEW LEARNING

**R**ENAISSANCE means rebirth. The epoch of European history that is known as the Renaissance was the period of the revival of learning, with the consequent impetus to literature and art, that occurred in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For six hundred years after the death of St. Augustine, Europe was enveloped in a mist of intellectual darkness, the ancient classic learning being preserved in only a few monasteries. The dawn came slowly, with the magnificent conception of the wonders of life to be found in Dante, with the joy of living so evident in Chaucer. With the Renaissance, the sun burst forth in fresh glory and revealed itself in the development of ideas and in new-found beauty of expression. The causes of the awakening can be only summarised here. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 was followed by the exodus of Greek scholars to Italy, carrying with them the knowledge of Greek literature that the west of Europe had almost entirely lost. A century earlier the Italians had learned from the Moors to make paper, and, most important of all, the first printing press was set up at Mainz in Germany, ten years before the fall of Constantinople. In 1492 Columbus discovered America, and men began to have an entirely new idea of the world. Social, political, and religious ideas were revolutionised, and the spirit of inquiry and intellectual activity heralded the Reformation. There is no more happy coincidence in the history of the world than that the new learning and the printing press, the new way of propagating learning, came to Europe almost at the same moment.

Because of its nearness to Greece and because of its inheritance of the Roman tradition, the Renaissance began in Italy, and it was there that "man began to turn from the mediæval preoccupation with death, to raise his eyes from long dwelling on the grave, and to rejoice in the dear life of earth and the glory of this beautiful world." To quote Symonds, "Florence borrowed her light from Athens, as the moon shines with rays reflected from the sun." The Italian scholars turned their attention to rescuing the classical manuscripts from a mouldering death. Translations were made



from the ancient authors of Greece and Rome, whose work had been buried in the monasteries.

The Italian Renaissance was the period of the magnificent Medicis, patrons of poets and artists, and the gorgeously reckless Borgias ; of the Orsinis, the Colonnas, and the D'Estes, whose very names suggest ornate raiment, a fine and unmoral culture, and dark and mysterious intrigue ; of Michael Angelo and Raphael and Da Vinci ; of Ariosto and Machiavelli.

## § 2

## ARIOSTO AND MACHIAVELLI

In a brief consideration of Italian Renaissance literature, it is to Machiavelli and Ariosto that we turn in particular, though there was a legion of other writers busy in Italy during this period, whose work has genuine interest and importance. Italian Renaissance literature influenced great English writers like Spenser, Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Milton. It was, for example, from the stories written by Matteo Bandello that Shakespeare took the plots of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night*.

Ariosto's famous poem "*Orlando Furioso*" was described by John Addington Symonds as "the purest and most perfect extant example of Renaissance poetry." It is characteristic of its age in so much as its interest is human and that it has no concern with the deity or with life beyond the grave. The mediæval people were interested in the other world. The Renaissance was interested in this world.

Lodovico Ariosto was born in 1474. When he was nineteen he entered the service of the Cardinal d'Este. He started writing the "*Orlando Furioso*" in 1505, and finished it ten years later. The poem gave him a great reputation in Italy, and Pope Leo X became one of the poet's patrons. After he had finished his poem, he wrote comedies in the manner of the Latins, Plautus and Terence. Towards the end of his life Ariosto was appointed governor of a province situated on the wildest heights of the Apennines. Like most poets Ariosto was always impecunious, and the salary attached to the governorship was his reason for accepting what must have been an uncongenial office. His province was overrun with bandits, and on one occasion the poet-governor himself fell into their hands. When their leader found that his captive was the author of "*Orlando Furioso*," with a fine appreciation for literature he at once apologised for the indignity that had been put on him and set him free.

The "*Orlando Furioso*" is a romantic poem, describing fierce contests between Christian and Pagan knights, thrilling adventures and chivalrous

loves. Its theme is of the same order as the theme of the stories of King Arthur. The poem is written in a series of cantos, each canto having a prelude which acts as a link between the episodes and gives the poet opportunity for moral and patriotic reflection. "Orlando Furioso" was first translated into English by Sir John Harrington, an Elizabethan poet. Perhaps its finest passages are those in which Ariosto describes Orlando's despair and subsequent madness when he finds that Angelica, whom he loves, has been faithless to him and has married Medoro.

I am not I, the man that erst I was,  
Orlando, he is buried and is dead,  
His most ungrateful love (ah foolish lassè !)  
Hath killed Orlando and cut off his head.  
I am his ghost that up and down must pass  
In this tormenting dell for ever led,  
To be a fearful sample and a just  
To all such fooles as put in love their trust.

In another place Ariosto describes the death of a gallant young king with appealing charm :

See how a purple flower doth fade and die  
That by the mower's hand is lowly laid ;  
O'er in the garden falls the poppy's head,  
Weighed down and broken by the stormy rain.  
Thus to the ground, upon his pallid face,  
Fell Dardinell, and thus from life he passed.  
He passed from life, and with him passed away  
The spirit and the courage of his host.

At the beginning of the poem Ariosto declares :

Of ladies and of knights, of arms and love,  
Of courtesy and of brave deeds I sing.

And the spirit of the poem is expressed in the lines :

But he that loves indeed remaineth fast,  
And loves and serves when life and all is past.

Although Ariosto lived in comparative poverty, his genius was acclaimed by his fellow-countrymen, to whom he was "the divine Ariosto," and it is said that his great contemporary Galileo knew the whole of "Orlando Furioso" by heart. It may be seen from the short quotations printed here how direct is the connection between Ariosto and Shakespeare and the other Elizabethan poets.

Niccolo Machiavelli was the most important European politician of the early Renaissance. In his *Outline of History*, Mr. H. G. Wells has well



described how profoundly Machiavelli's famous book *The Prince* affected the thoughts of men and the course of human affairs.

Machiavelli was born in Florence in 1469. Before he was thirty he was appointed secretary to the governing body of the Florentine Republic. This office led to his being sent as envoy to other Italian cities, as well as to the court of Louis XII of France. His most important mission occurred in 1502, when he was sent to represent Florence with Cesare Borgia, then at the height of his insolent and magnificent power. Machiavelli told the story of this mission in a series of letters, in which he described Cesare as "a prince who governs for himself." In another place he speaks of him as "a man without compassion, rebellious to Christ, a basilisk, a hydra, deserving of the most wretched end." Yet for this picturesque monster Machiavelli conceived a considerable admiration, and in *The Prince* Cesare becomes a sort of model for other rulers to imitate. In 1512 the rule of the Medicis was restored in Florence and Machiavelli lost his official position. He was imprisoned and tortured, and afterwards retired to a small country estate, where *The Prince* was written. He died in Florence at the age of fifty-eight.

"Machiavellian" has come to mean subtle, unscrupulous craft. But the common judgment of Machiavelli is not entirely justified. He was a realist, with no great belief in either God or man, and he sets out in *The Prince* the principles of what is now generally described by the German word "Realpolitik," the political principles, that is, of Queen Elizabeth, Napoleon, and Bismarck. Machiavelli was not an idealist. He was concerned not with men as they ought to be, but as they are. Francis Bacon was a great admirer of *The Prince*, and he said: "We are much beholden to Machiavelli and others that wrote what men do and not what they ought to do." Hobbes, Bolingbroke, Hume, and Montesquieu were all to some extent his pupils.

The most conspicuous Italian writer of the later Renaissance period was the poet Torquato Tasso, the author of "Jerusalem Delivered," who was born in 1544, and died in 1595. Tasso was a poet of sentiment, and sentiment expressing the growing feeling for woman and music. Tasso finished his great poem when he was thirty-one. The last twenty years of his life were tragic. He became half insane, and spent his time "wandering like the world's rejected guest."

### § 3

#### RABELAIS AND MONTAIGNE

After Italy, the revival of literature came in France. François Rabelais, the greatest of all French Renaissance writers, was born in 1490 and died



in 1553. The Frenchman Rabelais, the Spaniard Cervantes, and the Englishman Shakespeare, are without question the three giants of the Renaissance. The Renaissance was a period of intense life following a period of stagnation, an age of learning, optimism, and courage. Its spirit finds triumphant expression in the two great books of Rabelais, *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*.

François Rabelais was born at Chinon in the province of Touraine in southern France. Very little is known about his youth, though it is said that his father was either an apothecary or an innkeeper. He took priest's orders in 1511, and for a year or two prior to that date and until 1524 he was a Franciscan monk, living in the monastery of Fontenay le Comte. Afterwards he became a Benedictine, and in 1530 he gave up his monk's habit to be a secular priest. He died on April 9, 1553. There are many legends about Rabelais's death-bed. He is said to have exclaimed: "The farce is finished" and "I am going to seek the great perhaps." But all these stories are probably apocryphal.

The Renaissance was, in a sense, a rebellion against the domination of a narrow, ignorant, monastical tyranny. Rabelais was a monk for over thirty years. He had an intimate knowledge of the abuses of the sheltered life, and he laughed at monks, and he it added, at most other people and things of his time, with whole-hearted laughter. Professor Saintsbury insists that Rabelais "neither sneers nor rages." He is a sort of sixteenth-century Charles Dickens, "a humorist pure and simple, feeling often in earnest, thinking almost always in jest." *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* are hard books to read. They are extremely obscene, though really not more so than other literature of the period, and Professor Saintsbury is perfectly justified in pointing out that the coarseness is open and natural and far less revolting than "the sniggering indecency which disgraces men like Pope, like Voltaire, and like Sterne."

His book is an orgy of words written in whirling sentences. He anticipated the love of fine-sounding words of Mr. Wells's Mr. Polly. The intention of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* is to preach the gospel of Pantagruelism, which teaches that only by humour and laughter can the world be cleaned and saved. Pantagruelism is a good and a true gospel preached by many another great man since the days of the great French laughing philosopher. As proof that Rabelais could be simple and unaffected, and that he has been grossly libelled when he has been described as nothing but a "dirty old blackguard," one may quote the following paragraphs from the description of the life of the monks and nuns in the abbey of Theleme in the translation by Sir Thomas Urquhart:

All their life was spent not in laws, statutes, or rules, but according to their own free will and pleasure. They rose out of their beds when they thought good; they did eat, drink, labour, sleep, when they had a mind to it, and were





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### "ULYSSES AND THE SIRENS"

By HERBERT J. DRAPER

Few stories from Homer's *Odyssey* are better known than this of the sea-nymphs who had the power of charming by their songs all who heard them. The legend told in the twelfth book of the *Odyssey* is that Ulysses thwarted the danger by filling the ears of his crew with wax and binding himself to the mast of his ship. The artist has taken licence with the Homeric story, for the Sirens were recorded as sitting on the beach of their island.



# MOTH.QVI GRELEDI CITUR EXODUS



qui ingressi sunt in egyptum cū iacob: singuli cū dō

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## INITIAL FROM THE WINCHESTER BIBLE

In the Library of Winchester Cathedral is the magnificent twelfth-century Bible, or Vulgate, one of the finest medieval works of art in this country. The illustration shows the Initial to the Book of Exodus, and depicts (above) the Egyptian and Hebrew fighting, and (below) Moses killing the Egyptian. Work of the so-called "Master of the Leaping Figures," about A.D. 1150, it is a splendid example of Romanesque art.



disposed for it. None did awake them, none did offer to constrain them to eat, drink, or do any other thing ; for so had Gargantua established it. In all their rule and strictest tie of their order there was but this one clause to be observed :—

## DO WHAT THOU WILT

Because men that are free, well-born, well-bred, and conversant in honest companies, have naturally an instinct and spur that prompteth them unto virtuous actions, and withdraws them from vice, which is called honour. Those same men, when by base subjection and constraint they are brought under and kept down, turn aside from that noble disposition by which they were formerly inclined to virtue, to shake off and break that bond of servitude wherein they are so tyrannously enslaved ; for it is agreeable with the nature of man to long after things forbidden and to desire what is denied us.

There is, in this Utopian picture, the characteristic Renaissance love of beauty and seemliness with the equally characteristic Renaissance enlightened humanism. Enough, indeed, has been quoted from Rabelais to provide ample justification for the fine saying that his writing “seems to belong to the morning of the world, a time of mirth and a time of expectation.”

## MONTAIGNE

Montaigne (1533-1592) wrote a generation after Rabelais. He had none of his fellow-countryman's coarseness, none of his humour, none of his tremendous enjoyment of life. When Catholic was persecuting Protestant, and Protestant was persecuting Catholic, Montaigne agreed with neither and did his best to protect both. In his essays he is garrulous, good-natured, often trivial—a very gentle philosopher.

Tolerance, kindness, sweetness, culture are the notes of Montaigne's essays. He talks always about himself, but there is in his pages none of what Mr. Lytton Strachey has called “the tremendous introspections of Rousseau.” Montaigne was a sceptic, the agnostic of the Renaissance. “What do I know ?” he continually asked. And he never found an answer quite satisfactory to himself. He was not the man to kick against the pricks, but he contrived to combine resignation with self-respect. In one of his essays he quotes an old sailor who said : “O God, Thou wilt save me, if it be Thy will, and if Thou choosest, Thou wilt destroy me ; but, however it be, I will always hold my rudder straight.” That is Montaigne.

His essays are himself. When Henry III told him that he liked his books, he replied, “I am my book.” It covers almost all human experience. It expresses the whole mind of a kindly man of the world. “One finds in it all that one has ever thought.”



Montaigne was a Catholic. Nevertheless, "it is a peevish infirmity, for a man to thinke himselfe so firmly grounded, as to perswade himselfe, that the contrarie may not be believed." He hated fanaticism. He hated cruelty and loathed the horrors of punishment in his day. His humanitarianism, indeed, would have been on a high level to-day :

As for me, I could never so much as endure, without remorse and griefe, to see a poore, sillie, and innocent beast pursued and killed, which is harmlesse and void of defence, and of whom we receive no offence at all. And as it commonly hapneth, that when the Stag begins to be embost, and finds his strength to faile him, having no other remedie left him, doth yeeld and bequeath himselfe into us that pursue him, with teares suing to us for mercie,

With blood from throat, and teares from eyes,  
It seemes that he for pitie cries,

was ever a grievous spectacle unto me. I seldom take any beast alive, but I give him his libertie. Pythagoras was wont to buy fishes of fishers, and birds of fowlers to set them free againe.

From the volume of his wisdom we select the following characteristic passages :

*Fear.* Such as are in continuall feare to lose their goods, to be banished, or to be subdued, live in uncessant agonie and languor ; and thereby often lose both their drinking, their eating, and their rest. Whereas the poore, the banished, and seeiy servants, live often as carelessly and as pleasantly as the other.

*Constancy.* The reputation and worth of a man consisteth in his heart and will : therein consists true honour : Constancie is valour, not of armes and legs, but of minde and courage : it consisteth not in the spirit and courage of our horse, nor of our armes, but in ours.

*Glory.* Of all the follies of the world, the most universall, and of most men received, is the care of reputation, and studie of glorie, to which we are so wedded, that we neglect, and cast-off riches, friends, repose, life and health (goods effectuell and substantiall) to follow that vaine image, and idlie-simple voice, which hath neither body, nor hold-fast.

For Montaigne the whole law and the prophets was summarised in the sentence : "The greatest thing of the world is for a man to know how to be his owne."

But the French Renaissance was not confined to prose : renaissance in literature is so vernal, so lively, so joyous that it inevitably expresses itself, not necessarily at its most powerful, but certainly at its freshest and most spontaneous, in verse.

Pierre de Ronsard (1524-1585) and the rest of the Pléiade group—next after Ronsard in importance is Joachim du Bellay (1525-1560) ; and after him, Rémi Belleau (1528-1577), the author of a few memorably, delightfully exquisite lyrics—had, as their poetic manifesto, *The Defence and*



*Illustration of the French Language*, which, written by Du Bellay, appeared in 1549. "In Ronsard," the greatest French poet of the period 1500-1650, "the love of learning for its own sake soon changed into a desire to use all his knowledge in glorifying and enriching his own poverty-stricken language. . . . New blood was needed, and Ronsard found it, as Dante had found it before him, . . . in the poets of Greece and Rome," says St. John Lucas, who adds, "Ronsard himself, that master of the lyric, leaves us with the impression that, though he often sings because he must, he often also sings because he knows the rules of singing." Of Du Bellay that perceptive critic remarks: "Ronsard is a typical son of the Renaissance; Du Bellay, with his melancholy, his petulance, his wayward gentleness, seems like a poet of our own time, and his verse probably appeals more intimately to Englishmen than the greater but less personal art of his friend."

## § 4

## CERVANTES

In Spain the literary glory of the Renaissance is the glory of Cervantes. Here, as in Italy and France and England, the golden age of the awakening saw the quickening of an essentially national life which found expression in a definitely national art and literature. The sixteenth century was the era of Spanish greatness. The Moors had at last been driven back to Africa, the Jews had been expelled, the Peninsula had become a united nation, made rich and famous by the prowess of her explorers and the valour of her armies. It was in this atmosphere of national glory that Velasquez painted and Cervantes wrote. Apart from the plays of Shakespeare, *Don Quixote* is the most beautiful and wonderful gift of the Renaissance to the literature of the world. And although Cervantes may have begun it with the idea of gibing at the whole idea of chivalry which, a real and human action-motive in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, had become something of an absurdity in the sixteenth, his great book became much more than mere series of gibes while it was growing under his master-hand. Hazlitt has said of *Don Quixote*:

The character of Don Quixote himself is one of the most perfect disinterestedness. He is an enthusiast of the most amiable kind; of a nature equally open, gentle, and generous; a lover of truth and justice; and one who had brooded over fine dreams of chivalry and romance, till they had robbed him of himself, and cheated his brain into a belief of their reality.

There cannot be a greater mistake than to consider *Don Quixote* as a merely satirical work, or as a vulgar attempt to explode "the long-forgotten order of



chivalry." There could be no need to explode what no longer existed. Besides, Cervantes himself was a man of the most sanguine and enthusiastic temperament; and even through the carved and battered figure of the knight the spirit of chivalry shines out with undiminished lustre; as if the author had half-designed to revive the example of past ages, and once more "witch the world with noble horsemanship."

Miguel de Cervantes died on the same day as Shakespeare in the year 1616. He was born in 1547, and he lived the adventurous life of a typical Spaniard of his century. He fought at the famous sea-battle of Lepanto, in which Don John of Austria, with a fleet of twenty-four Spanish ships, defeated the Turks. During the battle Cervantes received three gunshot wounds, one of which permanently maimed his left hand, "for the greater glory of the right," as he himself said. Four years afterwards he was taken prisoner by the Barbary Corsairs, and was kept as a slave in Algiers until the year 1580. From that time onwards Cervantes earned an insufficient living as a writer and a petty government official. He was always very poor. He was more than once imprisoned, and the first part of *Don Quixote* was probably written in a prison cell. This first part was published in 1605. It had an immediate success, and several pirated translations, from which, of course, the author received nothing, appeared during the next few years, both in French and in English. The second part of *Don Quixote* was published in 1615. *Don Quixote* gives the reader, as has been well said, a brilliant panorama of Spanish society as it existed during the sixteenth century. To quote Fitzmaurice-Kelly:

Nobles, knights, poets, courtly gentlemen, priests, traders, farmers, barbers, muleteers, scullions, and convicts; accomplished ladies, impassioned damsels, Moorish beauties, simple-hearted country girls and kindly kitchen-wench of questionable morals—all these are presented with the genial fidelity which comes of sympathetic insight. The immediate vogue of *Don Quixote* was due chiefly to its variety of incident, to its wealth of comedy bordering on farce, and perhaps, also, to its keen thrusts at eminent contemporaries; its reticent pathos, its large humanity, and its penetrating criticisms of life were less speedily appreciated.

There is the same charm in the diverse characters of *Don Quixote* as there is in the characters of *The Canterbury Tales*. And the note of the masterpiece is an understanding humanism which was not only the brightest quality of the Renaissance but is the characteristic of all really great literature. In telling the story of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes came to laugh and remained to pray. Don Quixote himself, "nigh fifty years of age, of a hale and strong complexion, lean bodied and thin faced, an early riser, and a lover of hunting," astride his steed Rozinante, so thin that its bones "stuck out like the corners of a Spanish reel," is a figure of fun. His adoration of his Dulcinea is ridiculous. His servant Sancho Panza is a glutton



and a liar. Yet long before one has read *Don Quixote* to the end the knight has become the real hero of a genuine human romance, and Cervantes has discovered, what Dickens discovered when he created Mr. Toots and Captain Cuttle, that to be weak-minded is often to be large-hearted, and that the foolish are often more worthy of admiration than the wise. The knight never fails in chivalry, and his faith is unshakable. One of the most famous incidents in the story occurs when Don Quixote couches his lance and charges a windmill. When he first caught sight of the windmills he was vastly excited.

"Fortune," cried he, "directs our affairs better than we ourselves could have wished: look yonder, friend Sancho, there are at least thirty outrageous giants whom I intend to encounter; and, having deprived them of life, we will begin to enrich ourselves with their spoils; for they are lawful prize; and the extirpation of that cursed brood will be an acceptable service to heaven."

When the knight's lance is broken into shivers and he and his horse are hurled away, his faith remains unshaken. "That cursed necromancer Freston," he said, "has transformed these giants into windmills to deprive me of the honour of victory." The faith that can remove mountains must be a faith that can turn hard facts into thrilling romances. And only the man with a great heart ever had the audacity to tilt at windmills.

Sancho Panza, for all his gluttony and selfishness, is a good-natured and faithful servant, and it may be that when Dickens attached Sam Weller to Mr. Pickwick he had Sancho in mind. Sancho Panza is shrewd enough to see through his master, but because he can see through him he can see what is in him, and his master's great heart commands his servant's affection.

Cervantes gave the world one of its greatest and noblest figures—sanguine and enthusiastic, ennobled by his very illusions, graced with true dignity, even in the most undignified situations—always entirely lovable.

As Shakespeare, who died in the same year as Cervantes, had great contemporaries and successors, so had Cervantes—though in the genres of poetry and drama.

First, however, two men that came before him: Garcilaso de la Vega (1503–1536) and Fray Luis de Leon (1528–1591), poets both; the former, Italianate, derivative, yet fluent and exuberant; the latter a priest, yet gently pessimistic, melancholy, with true fire and genius beneath the restraint—famous in his lifetime as a mystical prose-writer.

Then two writers who were rather dramatists than poets: Lope de Vega (1562–1635) and Pedro Calderon de la Barca (1600–1681)—Calderon, for short. Both were extraordinarily prolific dramatists. Lope de Vega was by nature a poet, yet he chose drama, in which he achieved everlasting fame; Calderon was much less of a poet, and "when he died, poetry seemed



to have died with him" (J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly) for well over a century and a half. Calderon was a greater dramatist than Lope de Vega.

Turning back a little in time, we have Luis de Gongora (1561-1627) and Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas (Quevedo, for short: 1580-1645), the former only a poet, though a great one, the latter a writer talented in other genres also. As Lope de Vega and Calderon exercised much influence on European drama, so Gongora very considerably influenced European poetry. He was vigorous and brilliant, his verse moved fluently, rapidly; less happily, perhaps, he developed a puzzling, enigmatic preciousness—a manner that came to be known as Gongorism. Quevedo, on the other hand, wrote "powerful verse surcharged with mordant cynicism or patriotic indignation" (Fitzmaurice-Kelly).

In Spain, as in France, as in Germany until c. 1770, and as in England until c. 1780, the eighteenth century was a very bad period for poetry. Three poets, however, may be mentioned: N. de Moratin (1737-1780), J. M. Valdes (1754-1817), and M. J. Quintana (1772-1857), the last an unconvincing link with the Romantic poets, the real link being the Duque (Duke) de Rivas (1791-1865), who brought to the Spanish theatre the manner of the French Romantics. (The Spanish Romantics are treated elsewhere—Chapter XXXV, last section.)

In 1580-1660, Spain produced an astonishing number of picaresque novels (short: what the French call *contes*) and stories—tales of beggars, criminals, shady adventurers. Lively and realistic, they exercised a considerable influence in England, Italy, and France; the Frenchman, Le Sage, was the most notable of the imitators—indeed, he outdid his masters.

Here can be conveniently placed a brief mention of the most famous of Portuguese writers: Luis de Camoens (1524?-1580), author of that celebrated epic, *The Lusiad* (1572). Dealing ostensibly with Vasco da Gama's historic voyage, made at the end of the fifteenth century, it constitutes, in reality, a poetic pæan to Portugal and its history. In addition to writing several plays, he led an adventurous and somewhat disorderly life, travelled considerably, saw much service (during which he lost an eye) as a soldier, and died of the plague. There exists an English translation (1880) of his complete works, as well as renderings of selections from his work. He was a fluent, melodious, eloquent writer.

## § 5

### ERASMUS AND THOMAS MORE

The Renaissance saw the two great movements which more than anything else, more even than the French Revolution, have moulded the course



of European history, the Reformation and the counter-Reformation. The Reformation occurred almost immediately after the invention of printing, and it was natural that the bitter controversy between the reformers and the adherents of the old faith should have led to the publication of a vast polemical literature. Books dealing with the religious and theological difficulties of bygone generations do not make exciting reading, and cannot be regarded as of any great literary importance. One, however, of the sixteenth-century theologians was a great scholar and a great writer. He was the Dutchman, Erasmus, the friend of Sir Thomas More, the author of *Utopia*, of Cardinal Wolsey, and of Dean Colet, whose enthusiasm for education and the new learning made him the founder of St. Paul's School, London. At the beginning of the Renaissance there was, perhaps, a greater enthusiasm for learning than there has been at any other time in European history, and of all the learned men in Renaissance Europe, Erasmus was notoriously the most learned. Popes, emperors, and kings conspired to do him honour.

Erasmus was one of the last great European writers who wrote in Latin. He was a voluminous author, and perhaps to modern readers his most interesting book is *The Praise of Folly*, which was reprinted more than seven times in the course of a few months. In *The Praise of Folly* Erasmus satirises "the student for his sickly look, the grammarian for his self-satisfaction, the philosopher for his quibbling, the sportsman for his love of butchery, the superstitious for his belief in the virtue of images and shrines."

Sir Thomas More, with whose writings the Renaissance may be said to have begun in England, was born nearly a hundred years earlier than Shakespeare, and was the contemporary of Ariosto, Machiavelli, and Rabelais. More was a great lawyer (a Lord Chancellor in the reign of Henry VIII), a scholar, and a man of wide culture and appreciation. He was the intimate friend of Dean Colet, of Erasmus, and of the Dutch painter Holbein, who lived for a while in his house at Chelsea. He was a wit and a man of conscience and character, who lost great place and finally his life rather than agree to the Act of Supremacy, which made Henry VIII the supreme head of the English Church, declaring that "there are things which no Parliament can do—no Parliament can make a law that God shall not be God." It is an interesting fact that this great Renaissance scholar should have been beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1886 and should now live in Church history as the Blessed Thomas More.

Thomas More was fascinated by the new learning in his early youth, and he was one of the first Englishmen to learn to read Greek. His famous book *Utopia*, which inspired Bacon's *The New Atlantis* and many another



dream of the future, and which has given an expressive adjective to the English language, was obviously based on Plato's *Republic*. It is impossible to understand the spirit of the Renaissance unless one remembers that it was the age of the discovery of new countries, as well as of the discovery of the joy of old books ; the age of great voyagers as well as of great poets. The strange new continent of America had been discovered, and it was natural for a Renaissance thinker, weary of old abuses, and longing for a more rational and more kindly society, to imagine this existence of a far-away island, a Utopia, where men should live together in happiness and content. More followed Erasmus in writing his *Utopia* in Latin. It was first published in 1516 at Louvain. A second edition was issued in Paris in 1517, and a third edition at Basle in 1518. The first English translation, by Ralph Robinson, was published in 1551. Mark Pattison says that in the *Utopia* More "not only denounced the ordinary vices of power, but evinced an enlightenment of sentiment which went far beyond the most statesmanlike ideas to be found among his contemporaries, pronouncing not merely for toleration, but rising even to the philosophic conception of the indifference of religious creed."

In *Utopia*, More described an imaginary island republic, the home of a people living an ideal life.

Among the other important prose-writings of Renaissance England were Richard Hakluyt's *Voyages*, the literary result of the age of Drake and his fellow-adventurers, and John Lyly's *Euphues*, an example of over-coloured and highly artificial writing, fashionable at a time when men were just beginning to realise the full beauty of their own language.

## § 6

## SPENSER AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

The spirit of adventure, the joy of beauty, the new knowledge of ancient Greek and Renaissance Italian poetry were the influences to which Elizabethan poetry owed its character. The Elizabethan poet was a courtier. The Virgin Queen, herself no mean scholar, was the patron of letters, and the almost idolatrous regard that poets like Edmund Spenser and Philip Sidney had for her is clearly indicated in Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho !* The history of modern English poetry begins years before the accession of Elizabeth with Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey, both of whom lost their lives on the scaffold during the tyranny of Henry VIII. Wyatt was the first poet to write a sonnet in the English language. In addition



to sonnets, Wyatt wrote songs, madrigals, and elegies, and his pretty talent may be gathered from his "The Lover's Appeal":

And wilt thou leave me thus,  
That hath given thee my heart  
Never for to depart  
Neither for pain nor smart:  
And wilt thou leave me thus?  
Say nay! say nay!  
And wilt thou leave me thus,  
And have no more pity  
Of him that loveth thee?  
Alas! thy cruelty!  
And wilt thou leave me thus?  
Say nay! say nay!

Wyatt and his contemporary, Surrey, were the forerunners of Sidney and Spenser. Sir Philip Sidney is one of the most fascinating figures in English literary history—poet, scholar, traveller, and soldier. His *Arcadia* is a prose romance something in the manner of William Morris. His *Apology for Poetry* is an interesting apology of a poet for his art. His *Astrophel and Stella* is a series of sonnets relating the poet's own sad love-story, overcoloured at times, but always sincere. Here is the first sonnet of the series:

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,  
That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain,—  
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,—  
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,—  
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,  
Studying inventions fine her wits to entertain;  
Oft turning others' leaves to see if thence would flow  
Some fresh and fruitful flower upon my sunburned brain.  
But words came halting forth. . . .  
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite.  
"Fool," said my muse to me, "look in thy heart and write."

Edmund Spenser, the author of *The Faerie Queene*, was born in London in 1552.

Merry London, my most kindly nurse,  
That to me gave this life's first native source.

He was educated at Merchant Taylors' School and Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, and while he was quite a boy he translated Petrarch into English verse. His first volume of poetry, *The Shepherd's Calendar*, was published in 1579 and dedicated to Philip Sidney. In 1580 Spenser was appointed Secretary to the Lord Deputy of Ireland, and most of the rest of his life

was spent in that country. He was concerned in the Elizabethan repressions, and in his *View of the State of Ireland* he elaborated a vigorous policy for bringing the Irish to heel that in after years commended itself to Cromwell. Spenser was meanly treated by the queen, and Ben Jonson declares that he died of starvation in 1599. He was buried near Chaucer in Westminster Abbey. His great work, *The Faerie Queene*, was written in Ireland. It is an elaborate series of allegories extremely difficult to understand, in which the poet set out to describe the character and training of an Englishman. The poem abounds in the manner of Ariosto with brave knights and fearsome dragons. Its value as literature depends on the charm of the verse, the variety of the imagery, and the abounding sense of beauty. Charles Lamb describes Spenser as "the poets' poet," and Milton, Dryden, Pope, and Keats have acclaimed him their master.

Although Spenser's touch is sometimes indecisive he has often vivid pictures in *The Faerie Queene*—as that of the knight peering into the den of the monster by the light of his own gleaming mail ; of Fury, chained in iron, with eyes that flashed sparkles, gnawing his ruddy beard ; of Mammon in his armour of rusted iron and dull gold, counting his hoard of coins ; or of the little fountain in the Bower of Bliss where the golden-haired girls were bathing. Some of the most attractive writing is found in the " Epithalamion " :

Wake now, my love, awake ! for it is time ;  
 The Rosy Morn long since left Tithones bed,  
 All ready to her silver coche to clyme ;  
 And Phœbus gins to show his glorious hed.  
 Hark ! how the cheerefull birds do chaunt theyr laies  
 And carroll of Loves praise.  
 The merry Larke hir mattins sings aloft ;  
 The Thrush replyes ; the Mavis descant playes :  
 The Ouzell shrills ; the Ruddock warbles soft ;  
 So goodly all agree, with sweet consent,  
 To this dayes merriment.  
 Ah ! my deere love, why doe ye sleepe thus long,  
 When meeter were that ye should now awake,  
 T' awayt the comming of your joyous make  
 And hearken to the birds love-learned song,  
 The dewy leaves among !  
 Nor they of joy and pleasance to you sing,  
 That all the woods them answer, and theyr eccho ring.

Harke ! how the Minstrils gin to shrill aloud  
 Their merry Musick that resounds from far,  
 The pipe, the tabor, and the trembling Croud.  
 That well agree withouten breach or jar.



But, most of all, the Damzels doe delite  
 When they their tymbrels smyte,  
 And thereunto doe daunce and carrol sweet,  
 That all the sences they doe ravish quite ;  
 The whyles the boyes run up and downe the street,  
 Crying aloud with strong confused noyce,  
 As if it were one voyce,  
 Hymen, iō Hymen, Hymen, they do shout ;  
 That even to the heavens theyr shouting shrill  
 Doth reach, and all the firmament doth fill ;  
 To which the people standing all about,  
 As in approvance, doe thereto applaud,  
 And loud advaunce her laud ;  
 And evermore they Hymen, Hymen sing,  
 That al the woods them answer, and theyr eccho ring

Space forbids more than a passing reference to other notable Elizabethan writers. Sir Walter Raleigh, a friend of Spenser, was both man of action and man of letters, perhaps the most chivalrous figure of a chivalrous age. When Elizabeth died and James of Scotland ruled, this "tall, handsome, and bold man" was imprisoned in the Tower for thirteen years, during which time he wrote his *History of the World*. Michael Drayton—"golden-mouthed Drayton"—the friend of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, born in 1563 and living till 1631, wrote sonnets which bear comparison with those of Shakespeare himself. Drayton was a voluminous writer, and some of his most charming writing is to be found in his early work, "The Shepherd's Garland." The following are the last lines from a roundelay called "Crowning the Shepherds' Queen":

From whence come all these shepherd swains,  
 And lovely nymphs attired in green ?  
 From gathering garlands on the plains,  
 To crown our fair, the shepherd's queen.

The sun that lights the world below,  
 Flocks, flowers, and brooks will witness bear  
 These nymphs and shepherds all do know  
 That it is she is only fair.

## READING LIST

For the general study of the Renaissance see Edith Sichel's *The Renaissance*, in the Home University Library (Oxford University Press); and E. M. Tanner's *Renaissance and Reformation, 1494-1610* (Oxford University Press), which is particularly valuable for that closely related

movement, the Reformation. See, too, the admirable introductions to *The Oxford Books of French and Italian Verse*, and Emile Faguet, *The Sixteenth Century : Literary Studies*.

For Italian literature, not only of the Renaissance but also of the Middle Ages and of post-Renaissance times, see L. de Bosis's masterly "Sketch of Italian Literature" in his anthology, *The Golden Book of Italian Poetry* (Oxford University Press).

John Addington Symonds's *The Renaissance in Italy*, 7 vols. (John Murray).

*The Life of Gargantua*, Urquhart's translation (Routledge).

W. F. Smith's *Rabelais in his Writings* (Cambridge University Press).

*The Laughing Philosopher*. (Rabelais.) M. P. Willcocks (Allen & Unwin).

Montaigne, *Essays* (Florio's translation), is in Everyman's Library.

*Don Quixote*, 2 vols., in Everyman's Library (Dent).

Lope de Vega : *Four Plays* (Scribners).

Calderon : Various plays are published in English by Harrap, Richards, and Sidgwick & Jackson.

For these Spanish writers, see J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *Spanish Literature* (Heinemann).

*The Epistles of Erasmus*, English translations from his correspondence, edited by F. M. Nicholls, 3 vols. (Longmans).

Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly*, together with a Life of Erasmus and his Epistle addressed to Sir Thomas More in the Sesame Library (George Allen & Unwin).

Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, with the *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, in 1 vol., in Everyman's Library (Dent).

Spenser's poetry : There are excellent editions published by Macmillan and the Oxford University Press.

The poetry of Spenser, like that of Milton, is admirably analysed, and skilfully placed in the development of English verse, in W. Macneile Dixon, *English Epic and Heroic Poetry* (Dent) ; for a fuller account, see W. L. Renwick, *Edmund Spenser* (Arnold), valuable for all Renaissance poetry.

G. Saintsbury's *A History of Elizabethan Literature* (Macmillan).

*The Oxford Book of Sixteenth-Century Verse*, edited by Sir E. K. Chambers (Oxford University Press).

Walter Pater's *The Renaissance* (Macmillan).

Jakob Burckhardt's *Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (Phaidon).



## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, 1564-1616

SHAKESPEARE was an Elizabethan playwright. Let us begin by emphasising that obvious, but often, as it would seem, half-forgotten fact. He wrote plays which were lively and amusing, which were stirring and profoundly searching, and he wrote them to be acted in the theatre he knew.

Let us first consider, then, his playwright's task in its very narrowest sense. He wrote for a theatre that was structurally simple. Four boards and a passion, it has been said, are all that is needed for the making of great drama, and certainly Shakespeare had to learn to rely upon little else. We may picture his early plays given in broad daylight upon a bare stage, backed probably by some hangings, painted to resemble tapestry, through openings in which the actors could come and go. The audience, in composition and temper, we could probably best match to-day by looking, not into a fashionable theatre, but in upon a good boxing match. We should have but to exchange for the baser modern elements that batten upon sport a few Elizabethan rufflers, apt for a brawl and too handy with their daggers. But plays were then thought of as very good sport. They could be sport of the crudest kind too; more often than not they reeked and echoed with blood and thunder—a melodramatist of to-day would blush for it!—and were thick with such clowning as we relegate to a circus.

But there was this, besides, about that audience of prentices, courtiers, citizens, light ladies, and bullies. They could be stirred by the sound of poetry. And upon that for a foothold a great drama was founded. Shakespeare, who was sensitive to most current things and let little that touched him pass unexpressed, has noted the comic incongruous extreme of the matter in the character of Ancient Pistol—ruffian and coward, more highwayman than soldier, but a great theatregoer evidently, for his swagger is to spout blank verse.

There would be more ways than one, then, of capturing such an audience. You could play down to it. Equally, though less easily doubtless, you could stir it to unwonted enthusiasms, for there is no susceptibility like this susceptibility to poetry. Shakespeare was a popular dramatist from the first, and, apparently, he never ceased to be one (though with occasions of failure, one may be sure, and it is not to be supposed that *Troilus and Cressida* had the vogue of *As You Like It*, or that *Coriolanus* was as quoted a character



as Falstaff). But it is interesting to surmise how, without losing touch with his audiences, he yet developed his art, carrying them with him into unfamiliar regions of emotion and expression. For it is a far cry from the simple fun and simpler romance of *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* to the spiritual world of *King Lear* and to some of the talk in *Cymbeline*. It may be, though, that in the very latest plays he did lose touch a little. There are signs of it.

During Shakespeare's playwright's career, which ran from about 1591 to 1611, the physical features of theatre and stage changed somewhat. The process was probably the natural and common one, by which plays demanded new contrivances and these in turn suggested new devices for other plays. The whole question of the finally developed structure of the Elizabethan stage and the technical uses made of it is still one involving much dispute, and what is to be written here aims at no more than rough accuracy. The data are many, in the sense that each surviving play, seen in the light of its possible staging, contributes to them. But the fact that the change was, up to a point, very rapid, and the probability that each theatre was structurally developed to some extent upon the lines of its own convenience, makes more of the puzzle. Some few traditions of stagecraft had been inherited from the vanished and vanishing "mysteries" and "moralities."<sup>1</sup> But the directest influence of the sort upon the newly professionalised drama was its use of the inn-yard for a theatre.

These yards were surrounded, as a rule, upon all four sides by balconies. Three sides of these and the ground accommodated the audience. On the fourth side stood the stage—projecting twenty feet or so, if that much room could be spared—while the balcony immediately above could be used as an upper stage, for the window of a house or the battlements of a castle, or to hold the musicians if need be. It was easily curtained, and from its lower edge could be hung the arras that backed the main stage itself. To this sort of setting the earlier Elizabethan plays were necessarily fitted. And the theatre buildings which prosperity soon provided, the Theatre (alone in its glory for a little, with no need of a more distinguishing name), and later the Globe, where Shakespeare's best work was done; the Fortune, the Rose, the Swan—what charming names they found for them!—merely turned it to better account. The actors in their fine clothes were now protected from sun and rain by a pent-house roof. The arras at the back was made to draw apart and disclose an inner stage. This was first used probably as a convenient place from which to bring forward to the outer stage such properties as tables and thrones and the big curtained beds of the time. Later, a part of the play's action would be carried on there,

<sup>1</sup> This side of the question may be studied to the full in G. K. Chambers's *The Mediæval Stage*.



and, later still, something akin to painted scenery may have been set up, the curtains drawing to disclose it. This last possibility has been the subject of acrimonious dispute. But at some time or other the inner stage did begin to be so used. Our modern stage is its elaboration; while bit by bit—shrinking finally to the curved stage-front which exists in some theatres still—the rest of our Elizabethan inheritance has disappeared. Now this enlargement—as may easily be seen if a plan is drawn—necessarily led to the provision of other means of entrance than the platform in the inn-yard had allowed for, and two doors were placed at the side and back of the main stage. Side balconies were brought into use, too, so that the players in them could both see what was happening on the inner stage and could be more conveniently talked to by the players below. At this point, though—but for the making of a few trap-doors and the machinery for the lowering of some visionary god from the regions of the roof—the structural development of Shakespeare's stage halted.

It is well to have this picture in one's mind, for many seeming oddities in the plays become simple and satisfactory in their setting. It can surely but help one's appreciation of any art to have in mind the immediate circumstances under which it flourished. It is quite vital to a full understanding of Shakespeare's plays that one should grasp the essentials of his stagecraft, should see how these were imposed upon him.

The plays, for instance, were performed as a rule in daylight. This in itself would rule out any mystery-making of a tricky kind. So whatever supernatural impression was to be made by the ghosts in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, or the fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, must be due to the powers of the actors and the imagination of the audience.

Again, the main stage was thrust right out among the audience. Some of the audience, indeed, sat on the stage itself. This seems to us an outrageous proceeding, but the custom endured for a century or more. We must remember, though, that little or no pictorial illusion was being attempted, and always, in such a connection, that a theatrical convention is the most easily accepted or discarded of things. Italian actors still sometimes stop the play's action to return and bow after an applauded exit. In England, till a few years ago, plays and operas were performed with the auditorium lights turned full on, and opera-box conversation hardly ceased because the curtain had risen. At the best, then, an Elizabethan performance had to take account of an audience on three sides of it, while at the worst, one supposes, an actor might now and then be tripped up by the sword of some gallant gentleman who was more intent upon his own well-posed attitude than upon the play.

Now from this peninsulation of the stage several things follow. The making of stage pictures was impossible, and graphic effects must be thought



of, as it were, in the round. This led to an elaboration of the pageantry of fine dresses and stately movement. The dresses, to sustain such close inspection, had to be fine indeed. Large sums were spent on them. A king's costume might cost more than the writing of the play he appeared in; though, truly, many of the authors were ill enough paid. Wealthy young nobles, however, who, still lacking such outlets for extravagance as our completer civilisation presents them with, spent unbelievable sums on their clothes, and would endow the theatre wardrobe now and then with their surplus. Such pageantry grew in favour. But no play of Shakespeare's seems to have been swamped with it till, for an elaborate production of *Henry VIII* (in the writing of which he had, indeed, but a part), the firing of a real gun fired the whole Globe Theatre, and the fine clothes—and Shakespeare's own manuscripts probably—were all burnt.

But when we read in *Antony and Cleopatra* "Canidius marcheth with his land army one way over the stage" we must picture a symbolic little procession; half a dozen men-at-arms, perhaps, and a standard-bearer. If the men-at-arms marched well, though, and the standard-bearer bore his standard and himself as if they were—as in reality they are—the symbol of armed power and honour, this would suffice. The imagination of an Elizabethan audience was counted on for the rest.

## § I

If an innocent and intelligent foreigner came to ask how, lacking everything but the "book of the words," he could best compass a general appreciation of Shakespeare, what plan could we make for him? Or if a student, setting his mind free of all the casual and particular knowledge of the subject which must be tied up with any English education, were to want to start again free of it, what could we recommend? Not, certainly, a haphazard dipping into that close-printed, crowded volume that is commonly labelled "Shakespeare," not even the choice of a masterpiece or two. Let us try to make a list to fit just this particular purpose:

*A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

*Romeo and Juliet.*

*Henry IV*, Parts I and II.

*Twelfth Night.*

*Julius Cæsar.*

*Macbeth.*

That is a chronological list, almost. *Romeo and Juliet*, for reasons that will appear, is out of place. It takes us through all the "periods" of his writing



but the last. Though it does not give us Shakespeare in his every mood, it follows the clear steps by which he ascended in his art. *Hamlet* is the notable omission. But *Hamlet* is in many ways unique—as a play, and as one of Shakespeare's plays—and is better considered alone. *King Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra* are colossal; let them be read separately too. *Othello* might have replaced *Macbeth*; in the smaller sense it is a better play, in the larger one a lesser.

But the list aims only at such an approach to Shakespeare as will let us later feel instantly familiar with his work and thought wherever we touch it. Then, if we want entertainment and little more, we can take up *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, or *Much Ado About Nothing*. If our turn is for history, there is *Richard II*, *Richard III*, or *Henry V*. And, being quite familiar with our Shakespeare, we can try him in his harsher mood with *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*, taste the beauty and mark the liveliness of his prentice work in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Comedy of Errors*, and take our ease with him—as he took his somewhat in the writing of them—with *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. And even then, there'll be a masterpiece and some half-masterpieces left.

And after *what* to read comes—for this limited purpose—*how*. Here is a suggestion which may involve the student—and even more, the innocent and intelligent foreigner—in a little trouble. Read each play for the first time aloud, as if it were simply music. The plan may involve a forbearing audience or a soundproof room, but in the result it is worth the conquering of whatever self-consciousness may stand in the way. It is not that the sound of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is as important as the sense, or should be or can be divorced from the sense. To say so would be simply perverse. But it is simply true that to divorce the sense from the sound is equivalent to transcribing such a lyric as Shelley's "Skylark" into prose.

And it is not enough for the student of Shakespeare to admit this in theory. In these days of novels and newspapers reading has become a semi-automatic business with most of us; the eye, that is to say, is accustomed to transmit, at a glance, the meaning of whole sentences to the brain. The words are telescoped into phrases and the sound of the words stays unaccounted for. This must be hard on all poetry; to dramatic poetry it is death. For the dramatist writes to be spoken, and his art is to make the tune and the time of the speeches as indicative of the character as their sense must be. The sound of a speech may sometimes be made to express far more than it would be dramatically right for its sense to convey. So much is as true in detail of prose. In poetic drama far more is involved. The play's whole temper must be influenced—is apt to be determined—by the sort of verse employed. And contrast between character and character, scene and scene (things vital both to content and form),



is largely gained by the manœuvring as much of the sound as of the sense. Shakespeare sometimes does this obviously, by a shift from verse to prose, or by the use of rhymed couplets to end a scene.<sup>1</sup> In his maturity he makes far subtler use of it, to mark changes in the play's mood and to paint individual character. And to miss these effects is to miss not only their beauty but even perhaps to be misled in the play's meaning, when this hangs on their significance. So, as our modern habits of reading favour the omission to notice them, we must somehow force them into notice, however unreasonable the process may seem.

But in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, at least, the process will be nothing but a pleasant one. Set a child to read it through in a high, clear voice, shut your ears to the sense—if you could!—and open them to the sound, and it is hardly delusive to say that you could divine as much sheer music in it as in a Mozart symphony. But of course the meaning is so simple, so clear, so innately wedded to the words, that it will not be missed. For all that, though, there are passages that must first impress your hearing; if we let them in by any other door the beauty can never be the same.

. . . O happy fair,  
Your eyes are lodestars! and your tongue's sweet air,  
More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear  
When wheat is green and hawthorn buds appear.

Sound and sense are wedded, the sense is simple. But shut your eyes and speak it aloud—in one of London's November fogs, in the hot tropics, among New England snows—and, by sound and sense combined, do you not find your own senses in touch with the English spring?

Read the duet that begins:

Ay me! for aught that ever I could read,  
Could ever hear by tale or history,  
The course of true love never did run smooth. . . .

It is charming. But one must read it as a duet and imagine the two voices blending, or the full charm is lost.

When the first fairy voice is heard:

Over hill, over dale,  
Thorough bush, thorough brier,  
Over park, over pale,  
Thorough flood, thorough fire,  
I do wander everywhere,  
Swifter than the moone's sphere.

<sup>1</sup> The rhymed tag was also a conventional indication of an Act's end. Shakespeare is inconsistent in this use of it. But he often makes it serve him well when he needs a scene to finish brilliantly.



The trip of the verse must be light and right ; and the soft treble,

Swifter than the moone's sphere,  
must be bird-like.

Hark to the sound of Oberon's fantastic anger :

Tarry, rash wanton ! am I not thy lord ?

and to Titania's preposterous jealousy of

. . . the bouncing Amazon,  
Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love.

How the dainty thing spits it at him !

Listen to the gentle weariness of Lysander's

Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood,  
And to speak troth, I have forgot our way ;  
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,  
And tarry for the comfort of the day.

Taste the mischievous vigour of Puck's

Up and down, up and down,  
I will lead them up and down.  
I am feared in field and town.  
Goblin, lead them up and down.

There's nothing particular in that bit of jingle, one may say, except that it happens to be poetically and dramatically precisely right for its purpose.

Listen again when the brisk hunting horns break into the " still " fairy music and disperse the mists of the dream—to the heroic notes of Hippolyta's

I was with Hercules and Cadmus once  
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the boar  
With hounds of Sparta ; never did I hear  
Such gallant chiding ; for besides the groves,  
The skies, the fountains, every region near  
Seemed all one mutual cry. I never heard  
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

And then to the deeper tone of Theseus :

My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,  
So flew'd, so sanded, and their heads are hung  
With ears that sweep away the morning dew ;  
Crook-knee'd, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls ;  
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,  
Each under each.

And above all do not miss—just because he is called a comic character—the simplicity and charm of Bottom's immortal

Let me play the lion too. I will roar, that it will do any man's heart good to hear me ; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, " Let him roar again, let him roar again."

Having taught our ears due observance of the tunes and harmonies, the shifts of time and key between speech and speech and scene and scene (though one must not press these parallels between one act and another too far), nothing stands between us and the easiest enjoyment of the play. The archaisms are few, and though the fun of the rustic interlude is (unhappily) not so immediate for us as it was to the Elizabethans, we need not miss the spirit of it if we look for no more than it offers, if we shake free from that disastrous modern town-bred habit of supposing that a country clown and a circus clown are the same.

## § 2

Shakespeare wrote nothing more perfect of its kind than *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. One might indeed say—and defend the position—that he wrote nothing of any kind that was so perfect. And he wrote nothing more of its kind, for *Love's Labour's Lost*, its true companion, is an earlier work. The perfection of the play lies in the fact that the subject and substance and method are so suited. Its inspiration is lyrical, and no touch of the main story and no character in it is too heavy for a lyric to bear. Theseus, the classic hero, is a figment, but he is meant to be. Hippolyta is a shadow of what the name must suggest. They are there only to heighten the romance of the lovers in the wood, and to add dignity to the wedding—which was more than the play's end in the sense that the play itself was assuredly written for the celebration of some great wedding feast. Was there ever such a party given ! And the four lovers are not much more substantial or complex in character than the fairy king and queen ; rightly, for it is all a fairy play.

We pass now to *Romeo and Juliet*. This is earlier work and, for all its beauties, cruder work. And the conventions of its emotional expression will often be strange to us ; we shall need to make allowance for them.

Note the effect of the opening scene ; the progression from the comic prose of the quarrelling servants to the Prince's sounding verse. In a few hundred words Shakespeare gives us the family feud at full pitch, the men, the masters and their wives, and Verona's own share in the trouble. Mark



how, even before this, the very first words of the chorus strike for us the keynote of the play :

Two households, both alike in dignity,  
In Fair Verona. . . .

A piece of technique that Shakespeare learned early and never lost was to put his auditors upon the right track of scene and character, without delay. But the whole story, helped by the verse, seems to move swiftly and easily, the first act culminating in the charming action of the dance and closing with the perfect passage after Romeo has been recognised—we must picture as we read it the maskers departing with their torches,<sup>1</sup> and the two figures left alone !

*Juliet.* My only love sprung from my only hate :  
Too early seen unknown, and known too late !  
Prodigious birth of love it is to me,  
That I must love a loathed enemy.

*Nurse.* What's this, what's this ?

*Juliet.* A rime I learn'd even now  
Of one I danc'd withal. [*One calls within, "Juliet."*]

*Nurse.* Anon, anon !

Come let's away ; the strangers are all gone.

Nothing in this first act need strike the most "modern" of us as strange, unless it be the fantasy of the talk in the scenes between Romeo, Benvolio, and Mercutio, and their extreme addiction to punning. But we must remember that—apart from such talk being dramatically suited to Romeo's self-conscious humour—this was all in the literary, if not in the actual, conversational fashion of the day (for people who were quick enough to indulge in it). And puns were not then in discredit. They were not thought of as poor jokes, or even necessarily as jokes at all. The English language was, to cultured Elizabethans, like a new-found and wonderful inheritance. And they revelled in it, they sported with it in every conceivable way. But it did not occur to them—until the game wore thin—that they were degrading it by doing so. They played upon words romantically, emotionally. Shakespeare seems to have wearied of the practice very soon ; he probably found the dramatic effect too superficial for him. But even in his maturer and most serious work puns may be found.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Modern editions, with no authority from the Folio, mark their "exeunt" ten lines or so too early, and spoil the effect. Modern producers, however, generally show more sense.

<sup>2</sup> Now is it Rome indeed and room enough.

*Julius Cæsar*, Act I.

And though modern taste likes to dispute it—Lady Macbeth's :

I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,  
For it must seem their guilt.

It is, however, later in the play that these conventions most affect our modern sense of literary propriety. A play upon *ideas* we can reconcile with the genuine expression of emotion. Juliet's

And learn me how to lose a winning match  
is not disturbing. But, a few lines later, her

Hath Romeo slain himself? Say thou but I,  
And that bare vowel "I" shall poison more  
Than the death-darting eye of cockatrice;  
I am not I, if there be such an I;  
Or those eyes shut that make the answer I.  
If he be slain, say "I," or if not no  
Brief sounds determine of my weal or woe.

does perhaps make it hard for us to be as sympathetic as we'd like to be. Romeo, under the same strain of emotion, tends to drop his juggling. But even he, close upon:

... more courtship lives  
In carrion flies than Romeo; they may seize  
On the white wonder of dear Juliet's hand,  
must add  
Flies may do this, but I from this must fly,

It is noticeable, though, how, as the tragedy develops, Shakespeare's grasp is firmer. Take the scene of parting, which begins:

Wilt thou be gone? it is not yet near day.

Compare it with the balcony scene. The hall-mark of genius in that (incidentally, it is the hall-mark, too, of the lovers' true love) lies not in its much-quoted rhetorical beauties, but—to the present writer's mind—in the simplicity of the last twenty-five lines:

Juliet. Romeo!  
Romeo. My dear.  
Juliet. At what o'clock to-morrow  
Shall I send to thee?  
Romeo. At the hour of nine.  
Juliet. I will not fail; 'tis twenty years till then.  
I have forgot why I did call thee back.  
Romeo. Let me stand here till thou remember it.  
Juliet. I shall forget, to have thee still stand there,  
Remembering how I love thy company.  
Romeo. And I'll still stay, to have thee still forget,  
Forgetting any other home but this.



And so, perfectly, to the end. And when, later, they part, their happiness all ended, the lyric note is still sounded, the themes are the same—sun, moon, and the song of birds—but now they are transformed. The tone of the verse is deeper, its measure firmer and slower, and the speeches turn always to reality :

I must be gone and live or stay and die.

Her reckless

Therefore stay yet ; thou needst not to be gone.

With his answer

How is't, my soul ? Let's talk, it is not day.

But, again, her

O ! now be gone ; more light and light it grows.

And from now on Shakespeare plays with words for their own sake no more. There is the pathetic little passage between Juliet and Paris, in which she tries to mask her misery by joining in the usual game of equivocation ; but that has its dramatic purpose. And in the Juliet, told by the nurse to marry Paris, the Juliet of—

Speakest thou from thy heart ?

*Nurse.*

And from my soul too ;

Or else beshrew them both.

*Juliet.*

Amen !

*Nurse.*

What ?

*Juliet.* Well, thou hast comforted me marvellous much. . . .

Shakespeare has truly found out " how to do it."

Even more remarkable, from the point of view of his art's development, is the Romeo of the last act, and the means by which the figure is given its tragic stature. For the first time Shakespeare makes free use of the irony which was to serve his genius so well in maturer work. The act opens with an immediate stroke of it. The scene in the tomb, Romeo's bitter embracing of the still living Juliet, supposing her dead, his own death in her arms, is the most tragic irony. And touches like

Well, Juliet, I will lie with thee to-night,

and even the more didactic lines to the apothecary :

There is thy gold, worse poison to men's souls

are dramatic master-strokes. Above all, from the point of view of

Shakespeare's art, we should notice Romeo's reception of the news of Juliet's supposed death :

Is it e'en so ? then I defy you, stars !

This is the maturest stroke in the play. In this Shakespeare has mastered the secret of making the unspoken thing count with the spoken. No need to tell the actor what to do. He has but to reach the right expression of those nine words by legitimate means, and in doing so he will have silently conveyed a page of phrased emotion—and as no phrasing could convey it. Years later he paralleled this effect in *Macbeth* with

She should have died hereafter,  
There would have been a time for such a word.

Apart from its beauties and charm, which hold us to-day as they held the first audiences (for the play was a great success), there is much else of interest to the student in *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare's own discovery, for instance, in the course of writing of Mercutio. The famous "Queen Mab" speech is an attractive bit of decorative verse ; but it might have been allotted to anyone. Mercutio's death scene, however, is quite another matter. The very ineptitudes of the play are interesting. But fine strokes and ineptitudes both, the most interesting thing is to discover them for ourselves.

### § 3

We must give but a very few words to the two Histories on our list, for the topic will so easily widen beyond our compass. They are Shakespeare's most individual contributions to this then very popular dramatic form. The three parts of *Henry VI* were but in part—and possibly in very small part—his. In *Richard III* the influence of his collaborator is still strong with him. *Richard II* and *King John* are all his own, and he does what perhaps no other writer could have done with them, but what he does is what other writers would probably have attempted and might have carried through well enough. But for the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*, though he took what was indeed a recognised pattern for such plays, he so invigorated it as to give it quite new significance. The great dramatic virtue of these plays is that they not only tell the historical tale of two great events, but that they picture the life and mind of common folk in relation to them. And the centre of this achievement, of course, is the figure of Falstaff.



Like most of the great figures of fiction, he grew startlingly under his creator's hand.<sup>1</sup> From the Falstaff of Gadshill (good as he is) to the philosopher of the speech upon honour and of the scenes and soliloquies of Part II, is a genius's journey. It is by no means a bad plan, as a preliminary, to read the Falstaff scenes through by themselves. Then when in the midst of the pageant of events we have to imagine the huge figure come rolling on the stage, it may the more readily strike us with that friendly familiarity which the good actor can embody. This will help us, too, to resist the inevitable temptation—having once yielded to it—to skip the long screeds of verse in Part II in favour of Falstaff's next appearance. It is worth remarking how well Shakespeare himself kept him in hand. He is brought to the fringe of the serious business of the play, but, except in one instance, not entangled in it. And the one instance—when he maltreats the dead body of Hotspur—is an artistic blemish that has been the bane of many a producer of the play.

It is superfluous to praise Falstaff. He says of himself that he is not only witty but the cause of wit in other men. We may enlarge his meaning. He is the very idea of humour personified. He is the revelation of a natural force. The least Falstaffian of us have a share in him ; or, if we have not, so much the worse for our humanity. And here, perhaps, is the point of Prince Hal's relations to him, and the purely dramatic purpose of the character.

The paradox of Prince Hal has been much canvassed ; he has been as big a worry to Shakespeare's commentators as he was to his own father. How could he keep such company, say the Puritans ! And having had his fun with Falstaff, say the moralists, how could he treat him so scurvily ! The answer, surely, is simple. But though we make it with confidence, we need not suppose that either questions or answers on these points ever occurred to Shakespeare himself—ever occurred, that is to say, as abstractions. For the dramatist's answer to any "How could he have done it ?" will always be "He did." But as critics and for our own purposes let us survey the "sympathetic" scheme of the play (so to call it) and its adjustment.

We have Henry IV, troubled by the thought of the "bypaths and indirect, crook'd ways" by which he met his crown, clashing with Hotspur

<sup>1</sup> Don Quixote, Pickwick. Strange to think that in England and in Spain within five years of each other Shakespeare and Cervantes should be apostrophising chivalry by means of two such antithetical figures. This has been, no doubt, often enough remarked upon and, almost certainly, though not to the present writer's knowledge, the comparison widened to embrace Spanish and English reactions in general to these dying ideals and the new mind that each nation was making for itself. An attractive subject.

and Northumberland, who excuse their rebellion on those very grounds. And Henry mourns his son is not a Hotspur.

To pluck bright honour from the pale-face'd moon,  
but instead, matched to

. . . such inordinate and low desires . . .  
Such barren pleasures, rude society.

What can his future be ?

Hotspur is a brilliant character and most brilliantly done. He is the driving force of the first part of the play. The scenes with his father and uncle, with his wife, with Glendower are magnificent. "This tune goes manly" (to quote a later play) indeed. But Shakespeare can't quite love him. He is allowed little unsympathetic traits. He'd

. . . rather be a kitten and cry "mew"  
Than one of these same metre ballad-mongers.

And then, when the pinch comes ! his father is "grievous sick."

Zounds ! how has he the leisure to be sick  
In such a justling time ?

And for all his chivalry he despises Prince Harry. He resents and disbelieves the story of his reformation. He is jealous of him ; he asks if the challenge to single combat was made "in contempt." And his last words before they do fight are

I can no longer brook thy vanities.

But note Prince Harry's over his dead body :

. . . Fare thee well, great heart !  
Ill-weav'd ambition, how much art thou shrunk !  
When that this body did contain a spirit  
A kingdom for it was too small a bound ;  
But now two paces of the vilest earth  
Is room enough ; this earth, that bears thee dead,  
Bears not alive so stout a gentleman.

And then—but then !—when he sees the supposed corpse of old Falstaff, the lecher, the winebibber, the coward :

. . . Poor Jack, farewell,  
I could have better spar'd a better man.

It is all quite clear, surely. Shakespeare means charity, and what we call common humanity, to win.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The historical question is neither here nor there. Shakespeare did not desert history, but he moulded his characters to fit it.



And finally—to be done with this aspect of the play—when Henry takes on himself the crown, he takes it sadly. He is dreadfully sincere with the dying king.

Accusing it, I put it on my head,  
To try with it, as with an enemy  
That had before my face murder'd my father,  
The quarrel of a true inheritor.  
But if it did infect my blood with joy,  
Or swell my thoughts to any strain of pride ;  
If any rebel or vain spirit of mine  
Did with the least affection of a welcome  
Give entertainment to the might of it,  
Let God for ever keep it from my head  
And make me as the poorest vassal is  
That doth with awe and terror kneel to it !

With no self-righteousness in his heart, indeed, Henry V must pass into a world where good-fellowship can count for little, a grimmer and unkindler world. But he'll play his part there as it is written for him. Shakespeare's "All the world's a stage," his constant comparison of life to the mimic life of the theatre, was not an idle one.

There is, of course, much else to note about these twin plays. In general, they are written, it would seem, upon a flowing tide of success (not worldly success—though that they brought—but success in artistry) and confidence. The verse flows smoothly. Bombast (that sign in so sensitive a writer as Shakespeare of strain and anxiety) has vanished. In fact, the bombastic Glendower is a figure of fun. Pistol is one of nature's burlesques, and even Northumberland (in Part II, Act i) is accused upon very small provocation of indulging in "strained passion."

Shakespeare is now attending carefully to the structural balance of his plays, and, as we have seen, to the sympathetic balance too. Henry IV is not let die on the stage ; it would give him too tragic an importance. Prince Henry is carefully kept clear of all connection with the scandalous treachery by which Lancaster and Westmoreland dispose of the Archbishop's rebellion. In that scene, by the way (Part II, Act iv, sc. 2), let us note the convention of time which Shakespeare quite naturally adopts. An army is dispersed in three minutes, just as Capulet's ball consisted of one dance and no more.

Many details are worth remarking. Falstaff was, as one may say, always on the point of escaping from his creator's hands, such life had he given him. At the end of Part I it looks as if Shakespeare meant to reform him.

If I do grow great, I'll grow less ; for I'll purge, and leave sack, and live cleanly as a nobleman should do.

And the Epilogue to Part II promises us more of him than *Henry V* fulfils.

Ancient Pistol is not only one of nature's burlesques, but is he not (*was* this intentional?) an outrageous burlesque of Hotspur?

A quite important matter to notice is how the story of *Richard II* is kept alive throughout the two plays, and how the ending of each—especially the unconventional end of Part II—is contrived to carry us over to the interest of the plays to come.

The comic parts are full of topical allusions, some of which are easy to master, some of which must escape us. We can never hope to laugh at the Falstaff scenes quite as the Elizabethans did. But just a little trouble will help us with:

*Falstaff.* Where's Bardolph?

*Page.* He's gone into Smithfield to buy your worship a horse [*i.e.* to the meat market—or to the knackers].

*Falstaff.* I bought him in Paul's [in the nave of St. Paul's servants used to wait for hire, idlers, rufflers, and pickpockets too], and he'll buy me a horse in Smithfield: an I could get me but a wife in the stews, I were manned, horsed, and wived.

And, for the pick of the scenes—for the pick of all such scenes in Shakespeare—what is there to touch the arrest of Falstaff, the pricking of the recruits, and the dinner at Shallow's house? What can beat Dame Quickly's description of Falstaff sitting in her Dolphin chamber, or Doll Tearsheet's apostrophe to him,

Thou whoreson little tidy Bartholomew boar-pig,

Shallow's mourning for old Double, Davy's defence of that arrant knave Visor,

I did not think Master Silence had been a man of this mettle,  
or

Puff! Puff in thy teeth, most recreant coward base,  
and

Master Shallow, I owe you a thousand pound?

Heavens, how the thing lives!

#### § 4

*Twelfth Night* and *Julius Cæsar* were probably written and, rather more certainly, produced within a year of each other (1599–1600). *Twelfth Night* is the last of the three mature comedies. It seems to have been, alike



from its title and from a certain carelessness in its composition, an "occasional" piece—just as, presumably, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was—and it is guessed that, upon the success of *Much Ado About Nothing* and *As You Like It*, Shakespeare was commanded to write the play, to be performed, as custom prescribed, before Queen Elizabeth upon "Twelfth Day at night."

Choosing a modern epithet, one might well describe *Twelfth Night* as the most charming of the plays. It shows great forthrightness in the writing. Shakespeare has found a good story and he sets it out with practised clarity. But the earlier scenes are detached and rather thin. It is not till Viola and Olivia meet that he really grapples with his theme. One might even pitch upon the very line that lifts the play into life, Viola's

I see you what you are, you are too proud.

It at least lifts Viola into a proud position among the heroines of drama. Shakespeare has found what every dramatist wants in a play and a scene, contrast of circumstance, clash of temperament. Here is Olivia, the exquisite, disdainful creature, pampered with everything the world can give, but cloistered and unadvised, and a child in the world's ways. And here is Viola, shipwrecked in every meaning of the word, with the heartbreak of a hopeless love to add to all other troubles, facing the wide world with courage, with a pathetic merriment. The obvious dramatic situation, in which the girl is sent to be a wooer for the man she herself loves, is good enough, but how it is transcended in its playing out by such characters! Viola never fails her creator, nor he her. As to Olivia, the story lands him in difficulties; or rather, perhaps, it is his carelessness with this part of the story that does so. Character and circumstance can account for her impulsive wooing of the disguised Cesario. This begins well enough, but degenerates into a repetition of effects, and ends far too mechanically with the hurried marriage to Sebastian. Orsino suffers even more in the working out of the play. Shakespeare makes him, and manages to keep him, a fine figure for the best part of two acts. It is true that he is, as one says, a bit of a stick; a shade too self-conscious, but placed, poor man, in a false position. Nevertheless Shakespeare could have done more with him; moreover, it is likely, meant to do more. The lines in the last act about "The Egyptian thief at point of death" seem to be what remains of the fine tragical scenes that were to have been written for him, now desperately rounded up to make a timely end to the play.

For the truth is that Shakespeare found the comic characters of his invention better worth than the story he started with. Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Malvolio, Feste, Fabian, and Maria, comedy set in the fantastic gloom of Olivia's household; this gives the play its most characteristic

colour and life. It needs no analysis ; comment on it seems superfluous. The humour carries us along upon a tide of laughter, a tide so strong that it sweeps Orsino aside, as we've noticed, Olivia at times into a half-regarded corner, and would tend to swamp even Viola if Shakespeare did not contrive to catch her in the fun.<sup>1</sup>

There is irony as well as fun in the figure of Malvolio ; but the irony Shakespeare did not live to recognise. He is sometimes, says Maria, a kind of a Puritan. And, chirps up Sir Andrew,

. . . if I thought that, I'd beat him like a dog.

Says Sir Toby,

Dost thou think because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale ?

This was good theatrical gibing at the sour-faced crew. But fifty years later the jest had come true. There were few enough cakes and ale in England, and no theatres at all. The Puritans had revenged many a Malvolio. The character, though, makes one instance among many of Shakespeare's development of a conscience towards the creatures of his creation. He condemns the unpleasant fellow to mockery and a madhouse. But the madhouse scene is not altogether a joke.

I think nobly of the soul,

says Malvolio suddenly in the midst of it. And the line strikes a chord of conscience in us as its inspiration struck one, we may hazard, in Shakespeare. And thereafter Malvolio is a figure of fun no more. He leaves us, not liking him indeed, but feeling just a little ashamed of ourselves.

The play is peppered with allusions more or less topical. Of some we must miss the point. What lies in that occult

The lady of the Strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe who shall say ? And probably there was for the Elizabethan audience a sting in Sir Toby's

Nay, if you be an undertaker I'm for you  
which it lacks for us. But the fact that Sir Andrew is a knight  
dubbed with unhatched rapier and on carpet consideration  
need not pass us by. And when we hear he has  
the back trick simply as strong as any man in Illyria,

<sup>1</sup> In many modern productions, though, the undue and unnecessary elaboration of the comic scenes makes the disproportion of the play far worse than it is left by Shakespeare's own miscalculation.



if he but skips as he says it, we need not even mentally translate it into fox-trot to enjoy our laugh.

Such a happy crew as they are ! Truly, Sir Toby, the old ruffian, does get drunk of a morning. We may like to believe that if it weren't for that sunstroke he had campaigning, his head would be stronger. For he's not all sot. He stands up to Antonio, a formidable customer. We may wish, indeed, that he had not been dear to Sir Andrew "some two thousand strong or so," and even more that he did not turn on the poor innocent in the end with his

Ass-head and a coxcomb and a knave, a thin-faced knave, a gull.

But we may prewise that he was rash in his marriage bargain, that Maria, Lady Belch, will bring him up with a round turn, that he *will* find himself coming in "earlier o' nights" in future.

And who could ever be angry with Sir Andrew ? He is perfect fool, complete coward, and gull. But picture his face when his adored and trusted Sir Toby tells him that truth. And how charming he is ! And what manners ! His "good Mistress Mary Accost" and—with a bow to that benighted old swashbuckler—his

And yet I will not compare with an old man.

And when Sir Toby—his tiny, mischievous Maria having kissed her hands to him and away—puffs his old chest and pulls his moustache with

She's a beagle, true bred, and one that adores me ; what o' that ?

who can resist the pathos of

I was adored once, too !

Sir Andrew was a fool, but Sir Andrew was a gentleman.

Nor is there any need to speak of the verse. Open the play where we will, of itself almost it sings to us. It is Shakespeare at his most melodious. And it is tinged throughout with a pathos which gives to the play—one hazards—a charm that the robust *As You Like It* and *Much Ado About Nothing* lack. Whether it be Orsino's beginning

If music be the food of love, play on  
or Viola's

Make me a willow cabin at your gate  
Or Olivia's

O world ! how apt the poor are to be proud

or any one of fifty other passages that could be found, they all have this peculiar beauty, which Shakespeare never quite hit on again, though he did greater things. And the immortal :

A blank, my lord. She never told her love,  
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,  
Feed on her damask cheek : she pin'd in thought,  
And with a green and yellow melancholy  
She sat like Patience on a monument,  
Smiling at grief.

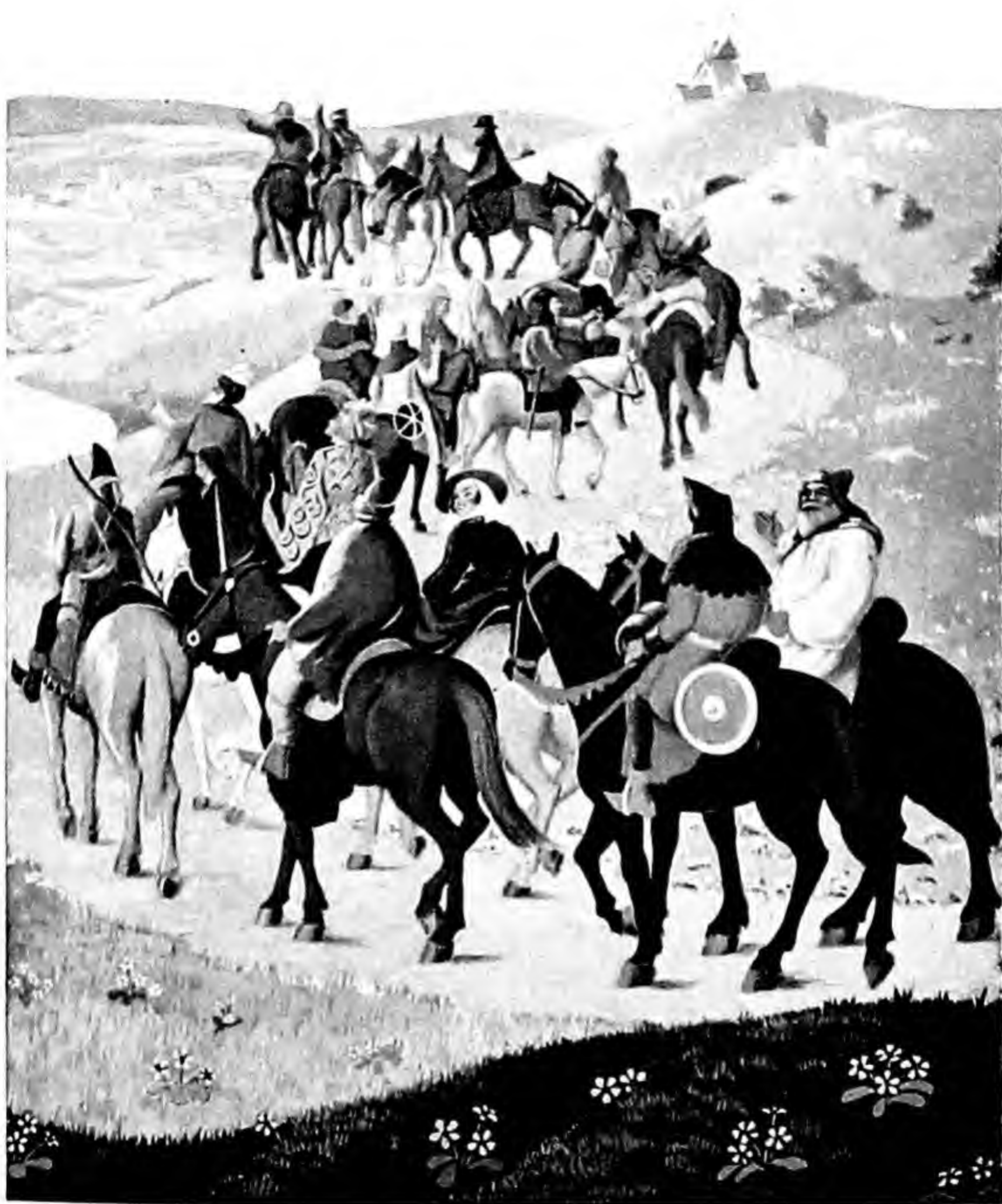
There is magic in that : what other word will fit ? For analyse and sum up the beauty of thought and language and still you do not account for its peculiar power to charm us. It is only once in a while that even the greatest poets can weave this spell.

## § 5

*Julius Cæsar* is a play of power. It is a fine play. Had Shakespeare written it and then written no more, he could still have been called the first dramatist of his time. But it has a further interest for us in that it is a prologue to work that lets us call him (though hyperbole is poor appreciation) the greatest dramatist the world has ever seen. What intimate workings of his nature were involved in the change is idle guessing. But in *Julius Cæsar* the student may add to the playgoer's enjoyment the noting of the things that mark it as the springboard from which the leap was taken to *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

The play will seem to us in some ways more "modern" than most of its fellows. We are not Elizabethan-minded enough to get the full flavour of the comedies, and the matter of the histories is strange matter to us as it was not to Shakespeare—no such gap of understanding divided him as divides us from Bosworth and Agincourt. But he, looking out from the little England of his day, sees the Romans much as we do after two centuries and more have taught us what Empire meant—and means—its greater power and its larger freedom. And in this we can mark his genius, and mark too the genesis of the power in the man which keeps his greater work a stimulus to men's minds still. Plutarch threw open the gates of a wider world vision to him, and his imagination passed through. This it is that gives *Julius Cæsar* its importance in the whole fabric of his work. The subject gave him an horizon which he never lessened ; from this time on his heroes' spirits move in larger spaces. It may seem strange that Shakespeare, who took ideas from everybody (in these days he would have been damned as a





# "THE PILGRIMS RIDING TOWARDS CANTERBURY"

BY DONALD CRAIG

Chaucer's vivid and exact word-pictures in the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, and in his separate prologues to each Tale, have tempted many artists to render the scene and show "Eek in what array that they were inne." Here a contemporary artist has given a decorative rendering of the gay pageant :

"Whan that Aprille with his shoures sote

The lone folk of the pilgrimage"



*Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the Tate Gallery*

### THE PLAY SCENE IN "HAMLET"

BY DANIEL MACLISE, R.A.

"What, frightened with false fire?" Hamlet's searching comment as the play, as he has planned, "catches the conscience of the king," is treated by the Victorian romantic artist. The absolute climax of Shakespeare's greatest play: Daniel Maclise has caught the moment of drama just as the guilty Claudius turns away from the spectacle he cannot longer bear, and prepares to rise and leave the scene.



plagiarist) could yet never learn the essential thing about them but from himself and in his own time. It might seem strange if we did not find it true of all real learning.

These classics had been always open to him, and Roman history was a common quarry for his fellow-playwrights ; he had once put a tentative foot in it himself. But not till the theme moved him whole-heartedly would he bestir himself. But then with what ease he moves ! The play rises in one sweep to an heroic height—to Cæsar's murder—and he holds it there. He is writing still with the firm directness of the later Histories. Cassius may be compared with Hotspur, but he is far from Hotspur.

I cannot tell what you and other men  
Think of this life ; but, for my single self,  
I had as lief not be as live to be  
In awe of such a thing as I myself.  
I was born free as Cæsar ; so were you.

That is a new voice, echoing from quite another world. Shakespeare does but give it body, maybe ; but he makes it ring true. And Cæsar's

Let me have men about me that are fat :  
Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights.  
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look ;  
He thinks too much : such men are dangerous. . . .

Read the rest of that and on through Casca's scene. There is a tone in it all, an elder tone of disillusion staved off by mockery, but of courage too under the burdens of the mind—different, how far, from the hopes and fears in which Henry IV and V lived and moved !

And so throughout the play. Its keynotes are such things as Portia's scene with Brutus :

I grant I am a woman, but withal  
A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife.  
I grant I am a woman, but withal  
A woman well-reputed, Cato's daughter.  
Think you I am no stronger than my sex  
Being so father'd and so husbanded ?

And Cæsar's

Cowards die many times before their death,  
The valiant never taste of death but once.  
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard  
It seems to me most strange that men should fear,  
Seeing that death, a necessary end,  
Will come when it will come.

As Antony's

O mighty Cæsar, dost thou lie so low,  
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,  
Shrunk to this little measure? . . .

As Brutus's reproach to the reckless Cassius :

. . . What ! shall one of us  
That struck the foremost man of all this world  
But for supporting robbers, shall we now  
Contaminate our fingers with base bribes  
And sell the mighty space of our large honours  
For so much trash as may be grasped thus ?

And as the closing

This was the noblest Roman of them all.

There are certain things in the story—such as the suicides that mark its end—with which, it seems, Shakespeare cannot assimilate his sympathies ; and it is instructive to note how comparatively ineffective these things at once become. Set them beside other passages in the play which should have no finer effect, and they appear perfunctory. The play sags towards the end in consequence. By the time *Antony and Cleopatra* came to be written, Shakespeare was master of this matter.

But as marks of his still growing mastery of the theatre we should note how the whole play is drawn together in a unity of effect ; how he uses every resource of words to paint an atmosphere of dark and dread for the night before the killing ; how skilfully he marshals his poetry and prose, his mob and his senators, to make contrast ; and how he uses all his armoury of "knocks" and music, "a low march within," the sound of the song fading away as Lucius falls asleep before the ghost of Cæsar comes, and the loud alarums of the battle—uses all these things for their full effect.

It is a very spacious play.

## § 6

Finally we come to *Macbeth*. Much has been said about it—it has been named, though not conclusively, as the greatest of the tragedies—and we cannot say much now within our allotted space. If it is not the greatest, it certainly is the grimmest ; the most unrelenting in its show of evil.



It is worth while to read this through first of all—as we planned with the earlier plays—for the sake of its tunes and harmonies ; partly that we may recognise to the full the sheer musical difference between

. . . Light thickens, and the crow  
Makes wing to the rooky wood.

and (say) the youthful :

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,  
Towards Phœbus' lodging : such a waggoner  
As Phaethon would whip you to the west,  
And bring in cloudy night immediately.

And partly that we may discover how—having achieved such complete mastery over words—Shakespeare will now sometimes use them but as a sounding-board or little more, for a meaning that quite transcends their unaided sense. A magic use of words indeed ! It may even be said that in these later plays he grows impatient of language. He wanted, on occasion, to give his actors weapons of words with which to batter—reason apart, if need be—upon the emotions of their audience. And if syntax interfered and would weaken the effect, so much the worse for syntax.

When Macbeth mutters

To know my deed 'twere best not know myself

neither actor nor audience need trouble to parse the sentence ; its effective meaning comes home. When Lady Macbeth, her mind hissing and coiling, like a snake preparing to strike, says :

. . . Thou'dst have, great Glamis,  
That which cries, " Thus thou must do, if thou have it " ;  
And that which rather thou dost fear to do  
Than wishest should be undone.

it is hard (even after settling what the true text should be ; a matter of some dispute) for the hearer to discover an exact meaning. But any Lady Macbeth can convey to her audience—for all that she may rightly wish the meaning came clearer—what her fears of Macbeth are. This habit of writing, it may be added, tended to grow on him till in his very latest plays he relapses to it without the excuse of emotional pressure ; the result then being at times a tiresome, if musical, incoherence.

The text of *Macbeth* is in itself a difficulty. Our sole authority for it is the first Folio, and there it is worse printed than most of the plays. But besides this it is practically certain that whole scenes in it are not

Shakespeare's at all. No responsible opinion holds that he wrote Hecate ; it is quite likely that his work does not begin till Macbeth's entrance with

So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

The play's unrelieved gloom, it would appear, lessened its popularity, and Middleton, probably—a good enough dramatist in his way—was brought in to liven it up with a few songs and dances. We must remember that in those days a play was as much the property of the theatre that produced it as were the clothes it was performed in. Middleton did more than was called for, doubtless. He may have tagged a speech or two with a more cheery couplet. But it is in the last degree unlikely that Shakespeare opened the play with Macbeth's appearance ; the material of the preceding scene is probably Shakespeare's, though it is mauled almost past recognition.

Again, it seems certain that the play was written with an eye to the special approbation of James I. This is betokened by the Scottish story and the witches, but more especially by the reference to Banquo's royal descendants and the speech about touching for the King's Evil. And this has an importance apart from its interest to the student. When James came to England one of the things, it would appear, that the English courtiers were proudest to show him, was the English drama. And he was not slow to patronise it. Kings and queens did not go to the theatre in those days. But in the winter of 1604-1605 no fewer than seven of Shakespeare's plays were given at Whitehall. And *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear* took their place with the Comedies as entertainments that a king and his court might be expected to enjoy.

The greatest of Shakespeare's plays this may not be. But he wrote nothing more terrific—in the true sense of that word—than the two sections containing Duncan's murder and Banquo's. Read and feel and picture and think over, and then again think over and picture and feel and read from "Enter Lady Macbeth, reading a letter" to

. . . there's warrant in the theft  
Which steals itself when there's no mercy left ;

and (noting the little breathing space of the scene between the old man and Rosse and Macduff) from :

Thou hast it now ; King, Cawdor, Glamis, all . . .

to

. . . We are yet but young in deed,

and see if you can exhaust the tragic effect of them. It will exhaust you sooner. *Macbeth* is indeed the tragedy of unchecked will destroying itself, as *Hamlet* is the tragedy of unready will wasting itself.



The first section of the two is the easier to picture. It is all the more explicit. The salient thing, perhaps, about Lady Macbeth, who is its motive-power, even more than her fixity of purpose, is her terrible clarity of vision. She not only sees how the deed can be done, but she sees each aspect of it in terms of such simplicity. She has a little doubt, apparently, as to whether her sex will not physically unfit her for this sort of thing :

. . . come to my woman's breasts  
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers

is her apostrophe. But when she finds that the wine which muddles men's heads only makes hers clearer, that she can stand and listen quite coolly while Macbeth commits the murder that she has made no mistake in doing her own part, it is with a dreadful, almost with a childish eagerness of daring, that she says :

. . . Had he not resembled  
My father as he slept I'd done't. . . .

And when Macbeth stands broken, body and spirit, for the moment by the horror of his deed, she turns on him coolly, steadily, with :

. . . Infirm of purpose !  
Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead  
Are but as pictures ; 'tis the eye of childhood  
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed  
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,  
For it must seem their guilt.

And she goes and does it without a tremor. Macbeth is as guilty at heart, but his mind backs and fills—as a boat's sail will in a doubtful wind—with misgivings and remorse. Her word is just :

How easy is it, then !

In all the happiness of peace after victory—a victory that Macbeth has won for him—Duncan comes to the castle. The calm beauty of sunset symbolises for us the happy confidence in which he comes. He is greeted by his “honoured hostess,” he kisses her, as the custom was (one wonders if her cheek was cold), and passes in with his little train. We must imagine the torches that cross the courtyard, the lighted rooms that we glimpse, the music playing while the king sups. Later come the few words of good-night to the troubled Banquo, then the stillness of the sleeping house and the tinkling of the bell that calls Macbeth to his work in the dark. And while the short night passes, the two shadows of evil pass in and out of the courtyard. The knocking on the gate begins and grows louder and louder

till it rouses the jovial porter, who cracks his jokes as he pulls on his clothes. The dawn comes.

Mark how Shakespeare brings in a new character and strikes a new note for the discovery of the murder. Macduff has come to the castle with Duncan, but he has not spoken before. It is his voice—the voice of a conscience-free, courageous man—that rings out with the news, that leads the chorus of amazement and horror. Mark, too, his quick direct question to Macbeth, when he hears that the bloodstained grooms have been killed. After this he falls almost silent; throws but a word and a glance towards Lady Macbeth, who has fainted or pretends to. We must see him with a steady eye on Macbeth and a very sceptical ear for his verbose protestations. Still, he's a shrewd man. He sees, as do Duncan's two sons, that Macbeth has the game in his hands. They are all in his castle and in his power. The king is past his help. He bides his time and goes. Banquo and Rosse and Lennox make peace with their consciences. Malcolm and Donalbain escape. Macbeth has won his crown.

All this has been plain sailing enough, but in the next section we must look well behind the words. We must hear in the simple speech of Banquo :

Thou hast it now ; King, Cawdor, Glamis, all . . .

the tone of the kindly good man tempted by the benefit of another's ill deeds. We must see Macbeth as king, weighted with splendour, his very speech pallid and hollow and cold. Observe the curious emptiness of his lines to Banquo as he sends him to his death, and listen to the ominous beat in "Ride you this afternoon?" "Fail not our feast." "Goes Fleance, with you?" Observe, too, that Lady Macbeth, but for a formal greeting, stands silent and is dismissed with the others. She goes in dread; evidently she lives in dread, for she can read her husband's thoughts—who better?—but he broods alone and tells her none of his doings. She knows well enough that some mischief is afoot, but she knows no more. We must picture her, while the last part of this scene passes, waiting somewhere, waiting for him to come. In the second scene we see she can endure it no more. She sends a servant to the king; Banquo is in her mind.

But when he comes he is as far from her as ever, and she is helpless to help him, she who has been the very spirit of his doings till now. She can utter only a platitude or two—tell him not to keep so much alone, to look more cheerful. When Banquo's name is spoken she shrinks from the ill implication, then forces herself to a question. Macbeth treats her like a child. He loves her, but he knows that she is but a broken woman now.

Now how little of this is written in words; but how right it is dramatically that it should be pictured, but left unsaid.



Next consider the episode of Banquo's murder ; perfectly done. The two murderers, with the third—to our surprise, as to theirs—sent to spy on them. A good stroke, telling us more of Macbeth than ten speeches might do. The scene painted for us in twenty words :

The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day.  
Now spurs the lated traveller apace  
To gain the timely inn.

Then Banquo's simple "It will rain to-night" ; and with a rough "Let it come down" they set on him. Fleance escapes ; the light goes out ; they stand in the dark, whispering a few detached words, the dead man at their feet.

We come to the banquet. A scene of some splendour it should be, for Macbeth would make his court a well-liked place by such means as he could. He moves among his guests, forcedly jovial. At any moment the news that Banquo is dead may come. If it gets about, so much the better that they should all be innocently feasting. The Queen sits aloof on her chair of state. He will not trust her nerve now among people, or she will not trust it ; and she is so weary she can hardly hold up her head under the heavy crown. But she sees him go to the door, and he stays there too long talking, and his face begins to play him tricks. She knows that danger ; rouses herself to recall him, to distract attention from his looks. He responds, but much too readily, speaks of his absent comrade, and then—Banquo has not failed the feast he was bidden to. He has come quickly in and there he sits blood-boltered in Macbeth's very chair. Think of the effect. No one else sees him. Macbeth even does not see him till he goes to take his seat, and the ghost turns his bloodstained face—it is within a foot of him—and stares at him with sightless eyes. There is no scene like it. Nor is it the physical thing that strains at our nerves. It is the sight of Macbeth, racked with horror, yet not yielding an inch, not able, as it were, to yield or to fly, for the spectre is in his own brain—how can he fly it ? And his wretched wife, weak and worn as she is, mustering what she can of her old strength to save him from discovery, to save him from himself—a ghastly, heroic effort. They are alone at last, among the flickering torches, at the disordered table.

It will have blood. They say blood will have blood.

And he harps on the word and the thought.

The secret'st man of blood,  
I am in blood stepped in so far,

He is a murderer both in heart and mind now, and nothing but a

murderer. He sees his path. She is exhausted, and she has lost all power over him. She can only say dully

You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

But he answers—but as if, cut free from all remorse, he could now command himself—answers hardly, confidently, boldly :

Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and self-abuse  
Is the initiate fear that wants hard use :  
We are yet but young in deed.

The play moves to its end, to the fading out of the shadow that Lady Macbeth has become. She killed herself; it could have needed little doing. The nemesis of her clarity of vision, of her seeing things as they were—a spot of blood but as a spot of blood, no more—is that nightly, in the sleep that should be some small salvation to her, she wanders, pitifully rubbing the blood of Duncan from her hands in vain. And Macbeth, self-damned, cannot even weep for her death, shrugs at the news and turns away. How do we first see him? Coming from victory, to be greeted by Duncan's generous gratitude. What is his end? The end of a beast tied to a stake and baited to death.

## § 7

I will make no attempt to sum up the virtues of Shakespeare, to pass æsthetic judgment on him. That is a task that has been well done and ill done and on the whole overdone. He is a great dramatist, a great poet, so great that we can all of us find something that we want in him. And the search—if as aforesaid we will take a little trouble to learn his language and the method of his art—need not be a hard one. Open the book, make ready, and his plays leap to life from its pages.

## READING LIST

It is difficult to choose between the many editions of the Plays published, but the Oxford University Press edition is as good as any. It is edited by W. J. Craig. *The Temple Shakespeare*, edited by Sir Israel Gollancz, is a delightful and scholarly edition in 40 separate small volumes. (Dent.)

For a modern edition of the plays, with fairly comprehensive notes, the Arden edition, now edited by R. H. Case, each play in a separate volume, is, on the whole, as good a one as can be found for the general reader.



For detailed textual study, Horace Howard Furness's *Variorum* should be used: the vast array of notes which this edition contains retail every comment of consequence that has been made upon the text since Shakespeare came to be edited. A more recent and more homogeneous critical edition is that of J. Dover Wilson; still in progress, it is being published by the Cambridge University Press.

For more careful study and for wider knowledge of the plays, these few books will be found useful:

*William Shakespeare*, by Sir E. K. Chambers (Oxford University Press); comprehends all that is certainly known, and shows this to be much more than is usually supposed. It also relegates to its proper place much of the nonsense that is talked about Shakespeare.—A shorter but valuable book is J. Dover Wilson's *The Essential Shakespeare* (Cambridge University Press).

*Approach to Shakespeare*, by J. W. Mackail (Oxford University Press).

*A Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, by H. Granville-Barker & G. B. Harrison (Cambridge University Press).

*Shakespeare's England*. Oxford, 2 vols., edited by Sir Walter Raleigh. This pictures the times he lived in, the people he wrote for, and is a veritable dictionary of the terms he uses.

*Shakespeare's Theatre*, by Ashley W. Thorndike. An excellent description of the technical means by which he worked (Macmillan).

The best dramatic and theatrical, as opposed to literary, criticism of Shakespeare's plays is that made by Dr. Granville-Barker, himself a notable dramatist, in the now famous *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (Sidgwick & Jackson). In this connection, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's *Shakespeare's Workmanship* (Cambridge University Press) should also be read.

*Shakespeare. Survey*. Edited by Prof. Allardyce Nichol (Cambridge). A collection of recent studies. These *Surveys* are being issued from time to time.

Senor Madariago's study of *Hamlet*, written from the viewpoint of a Spanish scholar-philosopher, is an important new contribution.

*A Notebook on William Shakespeare* by Edith Sitwell has essays on the tragedies and also quotations from Shakespearean scholars. (Macmillan.)

*Shakespeare, A Survey*, by Sir E. K. Chambers (Sidgwick & Jackson).

## XI

### SHAKESPEARE TO MILTON

**N**EARLY two centuries before Dr. Johnson and his Literary Club met at the Turk's Head in Gerrard Street, Soho, an even greater set of literary men met at the Mermaid Tavern in Bread Street, Cheapside. Here, one might have met Shakespeare and Kit Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, and the other great Elizabethans, roystering and gossiping. The drink was good.

Ben Jonson wrote :

A pure cup of rich Canary wine,  
Which is the Mermaid's now, but shall be mine.

And the talk was better. Beaumont is our witness :

What things have we seen  
Done at the Mermaid ! heard words that have been  
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,  
As if that every one from whence they came  
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,  
And had resolved to live a fool the rest  
Of his dull life.

Well might Keats say :

Souls of poets dead and gone,  
What Elysium have you known,  
Happy field or mossy cavern,  
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern ?

The problem of the so-called "minor" Elizabethans—minor, that is, in comparison with Shakespeare—is a much debated one. Swinburne, who loved anything which was full of sound and passion, overestimated them ; Shaw, the salutary debunker, underestimated them precisely because he demands matter and social sense rather than fine phrases which, analysed, make romantic nonsense. The truth lies somewhere between the two attitudes.

Let us remember that the Elizabethan age was a time of awakening for England, that the flood tide of the Renaissance belatedly reached us and expressed itself in literature. The menace of Spain was suddenly



lifted with the miraculous defeat of the Armada. Protestantism suited the English spirit. Exploration and seafaring widened the horizon of a sea-loving people. And the language went to their heads like wine, whilst the queen encouraged culture, and rewarded all this new daring living with Tudor grace.

## § I

## CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

Christopher Marlowe, who was born in the same year as Shakespeare, has been described by Swinburne as "the father of English tragedy, and the creator of English blank verse." He was the son of a Canterbury shoemaker, and took his degree at Corpus Christi, Cambridge, in 1584. His first tragedy, *Tamburlane the Great*, was acted when he was twenty-four. *Tamburlane the Great* tells the story, highly embellished by the poet's fancy, of the Mongolian potentate who overran India and defeated the Turks at the end of the fourteenth century. Marlowe makes his *Tamburlane* an eager poet, seeking for a perfect and unattainable beauty. As George Saintsbury says, "There is here no central action, only a dissolving series of scenes of terror and blood, no character except the dim and gigantic one of *Tamburlane*." In this play Marlowe uses, almost for the first time, the "mighty line" which is the chief creation of English literary art, and which is familiar to us in Shakespeare's plays. A supreme example of the "mighty line" is found in Faust's address to Helen of Troy :

Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium ?

Arthur Symonds has finely said that Marlowe's imagination "is filled with fire and flame, with smoke and hell's fumes ; with the savourous scent of incense, with the bitter taste of unshed tears."

The Elizabethan world was intoxicated by Marlowe's great literary achievement in modern English, for it must be remembered that Spenser was old-fashioned even in his own time and Shakespeare had yet to be known. Nash, a contemporary dramatist, sneered at "the swelling bombast of a bragging blank verse." But the beauty of Marlowe's writing and the dignity of his imagination are demonstrated by such lines as these :

If all the pens that ever poets held  
Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,  
And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,  
Their minds, and muses on admired themes ;

If all the heavenly quintessence they still  
 From their immortal flowers of poesy,  
 Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive  
 The highest reaches of a human wit ;  
 If these had made one poem's period,  
 And all combined in beauty's worthiness,  
 Yet should there hover in their restless heads  
 One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,  
 Which into words no virtue can digest.

Marlowe's *Tragicall History of Doctor Faustus* appeared soon after *Tam-burlane*. The tragedy was founded on a mediæval German legend, a version of which had already been translated into English and evidently read by Marlowe. Marlowe's Faust is not impelled to his bargain with the Devil by the desire for pleasure, like the Faust of the legend, nor by the hunger for knowledge, like Goethe's Faust. It is boundless power that his Faust desired and for which he was willing to sell his soul. "How greatly it is all planned !" Goethe exclaimed, after reading Marlowe's *Faustus*, and Swinburne declared that few masterpieces of any age equal it in "the qualities of terror and splendour." The play ends in a scene of awesome tragedy when the devils come to demand the fulfilment of the bargain—a scene, as Swinburne said, that has "no parallel in all the range of tragedy."

If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,  
 Yet for Christ's sake whose blood hath ransomed me,  
 Impose some end to my incessant pain ;  
 Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years—  
 A hundred thousand, and—at last—be saved !  
 O, no end is limited to damned souls !  
 Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul ?  
 Or why is this immortal that thou hast ?  
 Ah, Pythagoras' metempsychosis ! were that true,  
 This soul should fly from me, and I be changed  
 Unto some brutish beast ! all beasts are happy,  
 For, when they die,  
 Their souls are soon dissolved in elements ;  
 But mine must live, still to be plagued in hell.  
 Curst be the parents that engendered me !  
 No, Faustus : curse thyself : curse Lucifer  
 That hath deprived thee of the joys of Heaven.

[The clock strikes twelve.]

O, it strikes, it strikes ! Now, body, turn to air,  
 Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell.

[Thunder and lightning.]

O, soul, be changed into little water-drops,  
 And fall into the ocean—ne'er be found.

[Enter Devils.]



My God ! my God ! look not so fierce on me !  
 Adders and serpents, let me breathe awhile !  
 Ugly hell, gape not ! come not, Lucifer !  
 I'll burn my books !—Ah Mephistophilis !

[Exeunt Devils with FAUSTUS.]

*The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* was followed by *The Jew of Malta*—Swinburne said that only Milton had ever equalled “the glory or the melody” of the soliloquy of Barabbas in the opening scene of this play ; *Edward the Second*, in which Marlowe reached the summit of his powers ; and two short fragmentary plays. It is also generally believed that Marlowe was the author of a considerable part of Shakespeare’s *Henry VI*.

The great dramatist was also a lyrical poet, capable of the winsome heart of “The Passionate Shepherd.”

Come live with me and be my love,  
 And we will all the pleasures prove  
 That hills and vallies, dales and fields,  
 Woods or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks,  
 Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,  
 By shallow rivers, to whose falls  
 Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses,  
 And a thousand fragrant posies ;  
 A cap of flowers and a kirtle  
 Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle.

In the spring of 1593 the plague was raging in London, and Marlowe went to stay at Deptford, then a small country village. Other Londoners followed his example, and one night the poet was killed in a tavern brawl by “a bawdy serving-man,” who was his rival for the favours of a worthless strumpet. A tragic ending to the life of one of England’s greatest tragic poets !

After Shakespeare, Marlowe was the chief ornament of the matchless group of poets who met at the Mermaid, and after his death a younger poet declared that his plays

moved such delight  
 That men would shun their sleep in still dark night  
 To meditate upon his golden lines.

## § 2

## BEN JONSON

Ben Jonson was eight years younger than Shakespeare and Marlowe. His father was a Protestant preacher, and he was educated at Westminster School. Jonson served some time as a soldier, but while he was still in the early twenties he had become mixed up in what was then the rather raffish society of London actors and playwrights, attaining notoriety by killing an actor in a duel.

His first play, *Every Man in his Humour*, was produced in 1598, Shakespeare being in the cast. The characters of the play are London citizens—all well-known theatrical types—one of them, Master Stephen, being an evident predecessor of Bob Acres. *Every Man in his Humour* was followed by *Every Man out of his Humour*, which was a failure. The dramatist, acting after the manner of his kind, quarrelled with the company and wrote satires on the various players, and on dramatists more successful than himself.

Jonson lived until 1637. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, and an admirer caused to be engraved on the slab over his grave "O Rare Ben Jonson." Of his numerous plays *The Silent Woman*, *The Alchemist*, *Bartholomew Fair*, and *A Tale of a Tub* are perhaps the best known. He satirised the men and manners of his time as Aristophanes had satirised the people of Athens. He also wrote a treatise on Aristotle, and a volume of essays and maxims of no great value or interest. When James I succeeded Elizabeth, Jonson was employed to make masques for the court ladies to act, Inigo Jones supplying the scenery and decorations; and quite naturally the dramatist quarrelled with the decorator. He held his place as Master of the Masques until 1632, and then three of his plays proving failures one after another, he declared in an ode that he

left the loathed stage,  
And the still more loathsome age.

Jonson is mainly remembered for his beautiful lyrics, that have an attraction that his plays nearly always lack, at least when they are read and not seen. One of the most delightful is the "Hymn to Diana":

Queen and Huntress, chaste and fair,  
Now the sun is laid to sleep,  
Seated in thy silver chair  
State in wonted manner keep:  
Hesperus entreats thy light,  
Goddess excellently bright.



Earth, let not thy envious shade  
 Dare itself to interpose ;  
 Cynthia's shining orb was made  
 Heaven to clear when day did close :  
 Bless us then with wished sight,  
 Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart  
 And thy crystal-shining quiver ;  
 Give unto the flying hart  
 Space to breathe, how short soever ;  
 Thou that mak'st a day of night,  
 Goddess excellently bright !

Another is the song from " Underwoods " :

Oh, do not wanton with those eyes,  
 Lest I be sick with seeing ;  
 Nor cast them down, but let them rise  
 Lest shame destroy their being.

Oh, be not angry with those fires,  
 For then their threats will kill me ;  
 Nor look too kind on my desires,  
 For then my hopes will spill me.

Oh, do not steep them in thy tears,  
 For so will sorrow slay me ;  
 Nor spread them as distraught with fears ;  
 Mine own enough betray me.

The " Epitaph on the Countess of Pembroke " is both ingenious and charming :

Underneath this sable hearse  
 Lies the subject of true verse,—  
 Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother.  
 Death, ere thou hast slain another,  
 Learn'd and fair and good as she,  
 Time shall throw a dart at thee.

And Jonson lives for us all with the immortal song " To Celia " :

Drink to me only with thine eyes,  
 And I will pledge with mine ;  
 Or leave a kiss but in the cup  
 And I'll not look for wine.  
 The thirst that from the soul doth rise  
 Doth ask a drink divine ;  
 But might I of Jove's nectar sup,  
 I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,  
 Not so much honouring thee  
 As giving it a hope that there  
 It could not wither'd be ;  
 But thou thereon didst only breathe  
 And sent'st it back to me ;  
 Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,  
 Not of itself but thee.

Of the other Elizabethan dramatists we can do no more than mention the names of Beaumont and Fletcher, authors of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and many beautiful lyrics ; John Webster, the author of the blood-curdling *Duchess of Malfi* ; Heywood, whom Lamb called the prose Shakespeare ; Massinger, the author of *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* ; Chapman, the first English translator of Homer ; and Dekker, whom we remember for the beautiful lines :

the best of men  
 That e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer,  
 A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit ;  
 The first true gentleman that ever breathed.

## § 3

## FRANCIS BACON

Francis Bacon was statesman, lawyer, wit, philosopher, and man of letters ; and in each of these several capacities he won a pre-eminent place. Bacon was the last scholar who could say in his own chosen words, and with but slight exaggeration, that he had taken all knowledge for his province. He lived in the early dawn of the age of specialisation while it was still just possible for an able and industrious man to make himself master of the whole body of knowledge in existence. Many others had rivalled him in the mere acquisition of learning ; but none since Aristotle had so succeeded in impressing the whole with his own mental stamp, and in inspiring a new campaign against ignorance and disorder.

Bacon had the good fortune to live in one of the great ages in the world's history, in the " spacious days " of Queen Elizabeth. He was born in 1560, two years after the accession of that great sovereign ; and he died in 1626. As a boy he entered into the rich and glorious intellectual heritage of the Renaissance. In middle life he would see the publication of the masterpieces of Spenser, Montaigne, Cervantes, and Shakespeare. Before he died the supreme age of French literature was dawning. There was a new stir in the scientific world, the mediæval belief in mystery and magic was



giving place to experienced and rational induction. Copernicus had died in 1543 ; but his work was being carried on by Kepler and Galileo. Not since the days of Socrates had men been so keenly interested in the things of the mind ; and this interest Bacon shared to the full.

His own career displays all the grave defects as well as the excellencies of the sixteenth century. In the pursuit of knowledge he was indefatigable ; but he was equally indefatigable in the pursuit of ambition. He cheerfully laid down his life in the interest of science ; but he had been just as willing to sacrifice the life of his friend and benefactor when it stood in the way of his own worldly achievement. Indeed, Bacon is a curious and most unpleasing mixture of greatness and littleness, of magnanimity and baseness. His published writings were those of a sage ; his private letters are only too frequently those of a mean time-server.

Pope's well-known line, "The greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind," is only a poet's licence, but it is based upon undoubted facts. At the same time, the graver charge of corruption has been overstated. That Bacon had accepted gifts from suitors, a common practice at that time, for which he stood his trial, he did not deny ; but in his appeal to the king and to his peers he did, most proudly and emphatically, deny all guilt, and spurned the notion that the fountain of pure justice had been defiled by any act of his.

The case of Essex demands a few words of consideration. The headstrong folly of Essex had brought him within the limits of the law of treason, and his numerous enemies determined to accomplish his destruction. There was good evidence of his guilt ; but the mismanagement of the case by the great lawyer Coke put the cause of the prosecution in peril. Bacon owed everything to the disinterested friendship of Essex ; but in order to win the favour of the queen he put his services at her disposal for the purpose of destroying Essex. This turned the scale ; the unfortunate earl was condemned, and duly put to death. Many attempts have been made to extenuate this act, but without avail. It is a blot upon Bacon's fame which no apology can wipe out. In the just and eloquent words of Dean Church—"No one can doubt that the question was between his own prospect and his friend ; and that to his own interest he sacrificed his friend and his own honour."

#### § 4

It is not easy to explain Bacon's position satisfactorily ; and many leading scientists and philosophers have denied to him much credit. He was unquestionably a great writer and a great orator ; but was he anything besides ? The claim sometimes made for him that he was the father of



modern science cannot be maintained ; indeed, his work in this field is poor both in method and in results when we compare it with that of his own contemporaries, Kepler, Galileo, and Harvey. Nor can we say that he was the inventor of induction, though he undoubtedly did much to make it popular. It must also be admitted that his contempt for Aristotle, for the mediæval schoolmen, and for the deductive method goes far beyond what is justifiable. A modern philosopher would probably find more of real value in the writings of Thomas Aquinas than in those of Bacon. Indeed, Harvey remarks acidly enough that Bacon wrote philosophy "like a Lord Chancellor." Still Bacon accomplished much. He insisted upon the importance of knowledge, upon its unity, and upon its practical aim. It is sufficient here to quote Macaulay's summary : "The aim of the Platonic philosophy was to raise us far above vulgar wants. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to supply our vulgar wants."

Unfortunately Bacon was too conservative to abandon the old custom of writing all his most important works in Latin. Indeed, it is little to his credit that, in the age of Shakespeare, he should have had little faith in the future of the English language. For English readers the important works are the *Essays*, *The Advancement of Learning*, *The History of Henry VII*, and *The New Atlantis*. All these exhibit in greater or less degree the qualities of his style. There is abundant fancy, which sometimes rises into true imagination, delicacy of observation, a fine command of diction, and a real eloquence. The least ornamental of his writings in style is the *Essays*, which are composed of highly condensed reflections and apophthegms. The following passage is illustrative of this :

Crafty men condemn studies ; simple men admire them ; and wise men use them : for they teach not their own use : but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and compute ; nor to believe and take for granted ; nor to find talk and discourse ; but to weigh and consider.

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested ; that is, some books are to be read only in parts ; others to be read, but not curiously ; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others ; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books ; else distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy things. Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man. And therefore if a man write little, he had need have a great memory ; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit ; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not.

Bacon's writings consist of theological, philosophical, and political essays, a *History of the Reign of King Henry VII*, a vast collection of letters,



a collection of *Apophthegms*, humorous stories which Macaulay described as "the best collection of jests in the world," and *The New Atlantis*, a philosophical romance founded on Plato's story of a lost island in the Western Ocean. Bacon never finished *The New Atlantis*. In common with Plato, Sir Thomas More, and many modern writers, his idea was to sketch an ideal commonwealth. Solomon's house in *The New Atlantis* was a prophecy of the Royal Society. In addition to all this varied literary work, Bacon translated certain of the psalms into English verse.

The following quotations from Bacon illustrate his point of view and the charm of his literary expression. In reading them it is interesting to remember the theory that Bacon was the author of the plays ascribed to Shakespeare. There is unquestionably in many of these quotations thoughts often to be found in Shakespeare, and it will doubtless be felt by the reader that while it is inconceivable that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, it would have been quite possible for Shakespeare to have written much of Bacon.

"This is certain, the mind that is most prone to be puffed up with prosperity, is most weak and apt to be dejected with the least puff of adversity."

"There is nothing more certain in nature, than that it is impossible for any body to be utterly annihilated : as it was the work of the omnipotency of God to make somewhat of nothing, so it requireth the like omnipotency to turn somewhat into nothing."

"As for talkers and futile persons, they are commonly vain and credulous withal. For he that talketh what he knoweth, will also talk what he knoweth not."

"There be three means to fortify belief. The first is experience ; the second, reason ; the third, authority : and that of these which is far the most potent, is authority ; for belief upon reason or upon experience, will stagger."

"This is well to be weighed, that boldness is ever blind, for it seeth not dangers and inconveniences ; therefore it is ill in counsel, good in execution : so that the right use of bold persons is that they never command in chief, but be seconds, and under the direction of others. For in counsel, it is good to see dangers ; and in execution not to see them, except they be very great."

"He that hath wife and children, hath given hostages to fortune ; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief."

"A cripple in the right way, may beat a racer in the wrong one. Nay, the fleeter and better the racer is, who hath once missed his way, the farther he leaveth it behind."

"It hath been an opinion, that the French are wiser than they seem, and the Spaniards seem wiser than they are."

"God Almighty first planted a garden, and indeed it is the purest of human pleasures. It is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of men; without which, palaces and buildings are but gross handy works: And a man shall ever see, and when ages grow to civility and elegancy men come to build stately, sooner than to garden finely; as if gardening were the greater perfection."

"Little minds, though never so full of virtue, can be but a little virtuous."

"Great riches have sold more men than they have bought."

"A popular judge is a deformed thing: and plaudits are fitter for players than for magistrates."

"I know many wise men who fear to die; for the change is bitter, and flesh would refuse to prove it: besides, the expectation brings terror, and that exceeds the evil. But I do not believe that any man fears to be dead, but only the stroke of death. This is strength and the blood to virtue—to contemn things that be desired, and to neglect that which is feared."

## § 5

## HERRICK AND LOVELACE

The seventeenth century in England was the Puritan century, but it is important to remember that the more distinguished of the earlier Elizabethan poets were definitely Puritan. Men like Sidney and Spenser had no sympathy whatever with the common Paganism of the Renaissance. They were preoccupied with ethical values, and their attitude to life is very fairly described by Charles Kingsley in *Westward Ho!* The alliance between poetry and Puritanism was short-lived. It cannot be traced in Shakespeare, and as the poet abandoned Puritanism, so the Puritan, and even the man of religious mind who was not a Puritan, began to regard poetry as a device of the devil. George Herbert burnt his love poetry when he took Holy Orders, and Donne was only prevented by his friends from doing the same thing. John Donne is the greatest of the "metaphysical" poets, perhaps the world's greatest metaphysical poet: ardent, tortured, amorous; ascetic, intellectual, spiritual, almost mystically religious; lyrist and satirist. But while a great part of England was absorbed at the same time in the problems of predestination, and no taxation without representation, the true English light-hearted love of nature and joy in living was not without its literary



expression. This expression found delightful and permanent form in the poetry of Robert Herrick, the poetical son of Ben Jonson.

## § 6

Herrick was a Devonshire parson. For nearly twenty years he lived in a remote village intensely interested in the life around him—the Morris dances, the Christmas revels, the simple rural life. Herrick was a queer soul. He is said to have had a favourite pig which he taught to drink out of a tankard, and, on one occasion, he threw the manuscript of his sermon at the congregation because they were not paying attention. He was an easy-going worldly parson, hating Puritans, and staunch in his loyalty to the king. This loyalty caused him to be driven from his living during the Commonwealth, but he returned after the Restoration and died in his parish at the age of eighty-four.

Herrick's love of nature struck a new note in English literature. He was almost the first of the pastoral poets. His poems, as Andrew Lang said, are "like a large laughing meadow in early June, diapered with flowers and sweet with the songs of birds, some a mere note or two of merry music, some as prolonged and varied though never so passionate as the complaint of the nightingale." One of the most charming of his lyrics is "To Blossoms":

Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,  
Why do ye fall so fast?  
Your date is not so past,  
But you may stay yet here awhile  
To blush and gently smile,  
And go at last.

What, were ye born to be  
An hour or half's delight,  
And so bid good-night?  
'Twas pity Nature brought ye forth  
Merely to show your worth,  
And lose you quite.

But you are lovely leaves, where we  
May read how soon things have  
Their end, though ne'er so brave:  
And after they have shown their pride  
Like you, awhile, they glide  
Into the grave.

Herrick's "sweet, spontaneous, glad, and musical" muse is joyfully evident in the following :

TO DAFFODILS

Fair daffodils, we weep to see  
 You haste away so soon :  
 As yet the early rising sun  
 Has not attained his noon.  
     Stay, stay,  
 Until the hasting day  
     Has run  
 But to the even-song ;  
 And having prayed together we  
 Will go with you along.

Herrick loved children as deeply as he loved roses, and, for all his easy-going life, he had a deep and sincere sense of religion. But in spite of this Herrick's devotion to the Royalist cause cost him his living for a few years. The same devotion cost Richard Lovelace, the brilliant, handsome Cavalier poet, his entire fortune, and Puritan rancour condemned him to a miserable death at the age of forty. We remember Lovelace best for his lines :

Tell me not, Sweet, I am unkind,  
 That from the nunnery  
 Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind  
 To war and arms I fly.  
 True, a new mistress now I chase,  
 The first foe in the field ;  
 And with a stronger faith embrace  
 A sword, a horse, a shield.  
 Yet this inconstancy is such  
 As you too shall adore ;  
 I could not love thee, Dear, so much,  
 Loved I not Honour more.

In 1642 Lovelace was imprisoned at Westminster for demanding that the king should be restored to his rights, and while there he wrote "To Althea from Prison," which contains the well-known stanza :

Stone walls do not a prison make,  
 Nor iron bars a cage ;  
 Minds innocent and quiet take  
 That for a hermitage.  
 If I have freedom in my love,  
 And in my soul am free,  
 Angels alone that soar above  
 Enjoy such liberty.



Like Herrick and Lovelace, Edmund Waller was a Royalist, tolerant and broad-minded, but always a Royalist. The deep sense of religion is indeed characteristic of the writing of most of the Royalist poets. Nothing demonstrates the deep piety of the first half of the seventeenth century more clearly than the fact that the partisans of Charles I, denounced by the Puritans as the children of wrath and the enemies of God, included such distinguished writers of religious verse as Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Traherne, Crashaw, and Cowley, and such divines as Fuller and Jeremy Taylor.

## § 7

## DONNE AND THE METAPHYSICALS

The word "metaphysical," now applied generally to the group of poets that includes Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, and Cowley, was originally coined by Johnson to describe the strange, striking imagery used by Donne and his followers. These metaphysical poets have enjoyed a revival of interest during recent years under the influence of the new enthusiasm for mysticism and for words and images for their own sake. Men like Donne brought to English poetry minds full of the curious scholarship of the seventeenth century. Donne spoke to his readers in direct, colloquial phrases that sparked off ideas and images intuitively realised and understood. At its best, this made his poetry an exhilarating and often vulgarly earthly inflation of the occasional :

Busy old fool, unruly Sun,  
Why dost thou thus  
Through windows, and through curtains call on us ?  
Must to thy notions lovers' seasons run ?

and sometimes a noble expression of his deepest feelings.

Converted from Roman Catholicism in his early twenties, Donne was tormented throughout his life with doubts about his motives for leaving the church of his birth. Was his acceptance of the Protestant faith merely a marriage of convenience or could he honestly reject the doctrines of Rome ? And could he possibly reconcile his instinctive earthiness and the bitterness and sexual licence of his youth with his passionate need for mystical religious experience ? His battle for mental certainty and tranquillity lasted all his life and he wrote this not long before he was made Dean of St. Paul's :

Show me dear Christ, thy Spouse, so bright and clear.  
What! is it She, which on the other shore  
Goes richly painted ? or which rob'd and tore  
Laments and mourns in Germany and here ?  
Sleeps she a thousand, then peeps up one year ?

And yet in spite of his personal despair, Donne did achieve a sort of peace, a confidence for himself and for humanity. He was thought to be dying when he wrote this :

Perchance he for whom this bell tolls, may be so ill, as that he knows not it tolls for him ; . . . when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language ; and every chapter must be so translated ; . . . God's hand is in every translation ; and His hand shall bind up our scattered leaves again, for that library where every book shall lie open one to another. . . . By this consideration of another's danger I take mine own into contemplation, and so secure myself by making my recourse to my God, who is our only security.

The work of Donne's protégé George Herbert shows a less intense, tormented intellect and a higher degree of conscious craftsmanship. God, to him, was loving friend and master rather than awful judge. The prevailing tone of his work is happy service, his imagery homely ; and he made " things of ordinary use . . . serve for lights even of heavenly truths." He loved conceits and puns, and even wrote verses in shapes that echoed their forms like " Wings " and " The Altar." Abundantly human, he says :

My stuff is flesh, not brass ; my senses live,  
And grumble oft.

Although less passionate than Donne's, his poetry is deeply personal, full of feeling and happiness that even its high polish cannot hide.

The work of Thomas Traherne was for centuries either unknown or confused with that of Vaughan. By a chance discovery of two manuscript books on a bookstall and a piece of brilliant research the identity of one of England's greatest mystic poets and prose writers was established. The very strength of the feeling that these poets put into their writing gave a new elasticity to the poetic forms they used. The underlying rhythms within the forms remained, but the emphasis was in the meaning, and we have throughout their work the impression of a tremendous tension where the vigour and power of the material seem to be breaking the bounds of the chosen framework. Vaughan illustrates this strained fusion of intellect and emotion that is the foundation of metaphysical imagery, when he says wonderfully :

I saw eternity the other night  
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,  
All calm, as it was bright ;  
And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years,  
Driv'n by the spheres  
Like a vast shadow moved ; in which the world  
And all her train were hurled.

Since that discovery of Traherne's work, the prose poems from *Centuries of Meditations* have earned a foremost place as the expression of his philosophy



of Christian Pantheism in which the humblest person possesses riches and happiness in the knowledge of unity with the universe and its Creator. The passage recording his childish innocence, commencing :

"The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reaped, nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting . . ." compares with Vaughan's famous "Infancy" and with Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality." It has become an anthology piece with that other exquisite passage from Traherne :

"You never enjoy the World aright till the Sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the Heavens and crowned with the Stars."

## § 8

## ROBERT BURTON

One of the most remarkable books published in England in the years before the Civil War was Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Burton was another literary clergyman, and his book, which is unique in English prose, contains a definition of melancholy, a discussion of its causes, and suggested cures. Love melancholy is given a section of its own, in which Burton's quaint humour finds full play, and the book finishes in serious vein with an examination of religious melancholy and suggestions for the cure of despair. As he proceeds, melancholy comes to mean to Burton every imaginable ill, and the most modern scientific men admire the sanity and the subtlety of his diagnoses. He illustrates his points with quotations from scores of ancient and modern authors, and it has often been suggested that a large number of the quotations were invented by Burton himself. Dr. Johnson and Laurence Sterne were fervent admirers of the *Anatomy*, and it was one of Charles Lamb's enthusiasms. To him Robert Burton was a "fantastic great old man," and in a letter written in 1821 Lamb says : "I am hanging over for the thousandth time some passage in old Burton."

Burton's humour and wisdom may be appreciated from the following passages. Many of them have become the counters of everyday modern speech :

Naught so sweet as melancholy.  
Him that makes shoes goes barefoot himself.  
Rob Peter, and pay Paul.  
Penny wise, pound foolish.  
Can build castles in the air.  
All our geese are swans.  
Set a beggar on horseback and he will ride a gallop.  
Many things happen between the cup and the lip.

## SIR THOMAS BROWNE

Sir Thomas Browne, the author of the famous *Religio Medici*, was the son of a mercer, and was born in Cheapside in 1605. He was educated at Winchester and Oxford, studied medicine for some years on the Continent, and practised at Norwich, where he lived for over forty years. The *Religio Medici* was translated into French, Dutch, German, and Italian during its author's lifetime. Thomas Browne also wrote *Christian Morals*, *Letter to a Friend*, and *Urn Burial*. Browne was a deliberate stylist, that is to say, like Henry James, he cared more for manner than for matter. He loved to embroider, and he embroidered with extraordinary skill. He was more an elaborate literary artist than either a scientist or a philosopher.

The *Religio Medici* begins with a profession of Christian faith—"I dare without usurpation assume the honourable style of a Christian." It is a philosophic disquisition on the mysteries of life and death, and the following extract indicates Sir Thomas Browne's line of thought :

Now for my life, it is a miracle of thirty years, which to relate were not a history, but a piece of poetry, and would sound to common ears like a fable. For the world, I count it not an inn but an hospital, and a place not to live but to die in. The world that I regard is my self ; it is the microcosm of my own frame that I can cast mine eye on ; for the other, I use it but like my globe, and turn it round sometimes for my recreation. Men that look upon my outside, perusing only my condition and my fortunes, do err in my altitude ; for I am above Atlas his shoulders.

The earth is a point not only in respect of the heavens above us, but of that heavenly and celestial part within us. That mass of flesh that circumscribes me, limits not my mind. That surface that tells the heavens it hath an end, cannot persuade me I have any. . . . Whilst I study to find how I am a microcosm, or little world, I find myself something more than the great. There is surely a piece of divinity in us—something that was before the heavens, and owes no homage unto the sun. Nature tells me I am the image of God, as well as Scripture. He that understands not thus much, hath not his introduction or first lesson, and hath yet to begin the alphabet of man.

Thomas Browne was a difficult writer. Edmund Gosse has said of him : "Browne was greatly interested in the beauty of words, in their sound, their form, the image that they raised. But his treatment of them was very curious, and is not easily or completely to be justified. There was something abnormal in Browne's intellect, and it is shown in the rather mad way in which he tossed words about."

He apologised for writing in English rather than in Latin, and his idea of elegant English was a language full of latinised words only to be understood by readers who are masters of the Latin language. This affectation



and his general attitude to life enraged Hazlitt, who wrote of him : " His is the sublime of indifference ; a passion for the abstruse and the imaginary. He turns the world round for his amusement, as if it was a globe of paste-board. He looks down on sublunary affairs as if he had taken his station in one of the planets." Charles Lamb, however, said that Thomas Browne was one of the worthies " whom he should feel the greatest pleasure to encounter on the floor of his apartment in their nightgown and slippers, and to exchange friendly greeting with them."

Carlyle said : " The conclusion of the essay on *Urn Burial* is absolutely beautiful : a still elegiac mood, so soft, so deep, so solemn and tender, like the song of some departed saint flitting faint under the everlasting canopy of night—an echo of deepest meaning from the great and mighty nations of the dead." And George Saintsbury says of the same essay :

A chapter on funeral ceremonials, beliefs in immortality or annihilation and the like follows, and leads up to the ever-memorable finale, beginning, " Now since these dead bones," which has rung in the ears of some eight generations as the very and unsurpassable Dead March of English Prose. Every word of this chapter is memorable, and almost every word abides in the memory by dint of Browne's marmoreal phrase, his great and grave meaning, and the wonderful clangour and echo of his word-music. " Time, which antiquates antiquities," will have some difficulty in destroying this. And through all the chapter his style, like his theme, rises, till after a wonderful burst of mysticism, we are left with such a dying close as never had been heard in English before, " ready to be anything in the ecstasy of being ever, and as content with six foot as with the moles of Adrianus."

The first edition of *Religio Medici* was published in 1642.

Several of the writers dealt with in this section lived through the Commonwealth and after the Restoration, but they may all be regarded as belonging in essentials to the first half of their century. Charles I was beheaded in 1649. Cromwell was proclaimed Lord Protector in 1653, and the literary glory of the Cromwellian period and of the entire seventeenth century was John Milton, the Protector's Latin secretary.

## READING LIST

For the drama leading up to the Elizabethans, see *Minor Elizabethan Drama*, I. Comedy, II. Tragedy in Everyman. (Dent.) Also the volume *Everyman and Other Old Religious Plays* in the same edition, containing this greatest of all mediæval plays.

See also *The English Renaissance, 1510-1688*, by V. de Sola Pinto (Cresset Press.)

T. Seccombe and J. W. Allen's *The Age of Shakespeare*, in Messrs. Bell's Handbooks of English Literature.

Edmund Gosse, *The Jacobean Poets* (Murray).

J. Bennett, *Four Metaphysical Poets* (Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw). Cambridge University Press.

*The Life and Works of Christopher Marlowe*, edited by R. H. Case : 6 vols. (Methuen) (the *Life* is by C. F. Tucker-Brooke).—*Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, in *The World's Classics* (Oxford University Press).

The Mermaid Series of Old Dramatists (Benn).

Ben Jonson's *Plays* (2 vols.) in Messrs. Dent's Everyman's Library. (For the student and the scholar : the edition published by the Oxford University Press.)

Bacon's *Essays*, 2 vols., edited by Abbott (Longmans).

Bacon's *Essays* in Dent's Everyman's Library.

Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* and *The New Atlantis* in one vol. in the *World's Classics* (Oxford University Press).

The Nonesuch *Donne* : a notable selection of his works (the Nonesuch Press).—Complete poetical works (Oxford University Press).—*Donne : A Spirit in Conflict*, by Evelyn Hardy (Constable). Poems in Penguin.

Herrick's *Poems* in *The World's Classics* (Oxford University Press).

*The Poetical Works of Thomas Traherne* and *Felicity*, both published by Dobell and containing good introductions.

Sir Thomas Browne's *Works*, 3 vols., in Bohn's Library (Bell).

Also the *Religio Medici*, separately, in Messrs. Dent's Everyman's Library.

Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* is published in three vols. in Everyman's Library (Dent).

*The Oxford Book of Seventeenth-Century Verse*, edited by Sir H. Grierson and G. Bullough (Oxford University Press).



## JOHN MILTON

A good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.—MILTON.

JOHN MILTON, by common consent of critical opinion, holds a place among the first three great English poets. This is not to say that there are not a dozen, or even twenty, writers in the succession of English poetry who at times in individual quality touch a height equal to Milton's own. The word "great" is one that is commonly used about poets, often too easily, and generally, I suppose, with a difference. What is meant at the moment is that Milton stands pre-eminently for a very important kind of achievement in poetry, and, so far as can be seen in perspective up to our own day, there are hardly more than two other poets of whom the same thing can so definitely be said. There were many poets among the Elizabethans who in their best moments had as clearly the stuff of poetry in them as Shakespeare himself, but in breadth and consistency of performance Shakespeare transcends them all. It may be said that there is nothing which they did that he did not do as well and generally better. He was the chief and crowning glory of a vast range of poetic activity, practised by many men of great endowments, and, profiting as he did by their efforts and example, he brought the whole movement to its most perfect expression. So that, both by his personal quality and the actual volume of his work, it is of Shakespeare that we think instinctively as *the* great poet of his time. Because his time happened to be one of peculiar virtue as an inspiration to poetry, a time when the nation, both in adventure and culture, was first becoming delightedly aware of its own splendour and vitality, and was content to enjoy the spectacle of life, and share in its ardours purely for their own invigorating sake, without reducing them to moral or social problems, he comes to our mind always, perhaps, as the greatest poet of all. After him there are two other poets in the English story of whom something of the same kind may be said, John Milton and William Wordsworth. Circumstances of history made it impossible for either of these to inform their work with quite the same happy ease of spiritual youth that marks even the tragedies of Shakespeare, but each in his own way pre-eminently stood for one of the great natural movements in English history. After Wordsworth there is no poet of whom we can yet be quite sure in this matter. There are many whose work is certain of

individual fame for ever, but none of whom we can yet say that he, above all others, most clearly embodied that strange urge in one direction which underlies all the manifold workings of an epoch.

John Milton's claim to greatness by this standard rests, to put it very briefly, on his unwearying desire, implicit through all his work and once plainly confessed, "to justify the ways of God to men." The whole Puritan revolutionary movement in England was something more than a protest against the evil-doing of Charles the First. That was the occasion of its immediate expression in arms, but behind it all there was something far more constructive than this indignation, splendid though that was. The Elizabethan age—the accepted definition is as good as another—had been one of immense unquestioning activity. Physical adventure, the crossing of great seas in small boats, a childlike gaiety of response to the colour and arrogance of Renaissance culture that poured into the mind of the country from Italy, it was all a very festival of ardent and powerful youth. That, we know, is not the complete story, or, rather, a story with no need of qualification. Squalor and pedantry and mincing logic were not unknown, but these were accidental to, and not characteristic of, the time, which remained essentially one of eager and unquestioning joy in life, a finely irresponsible joy it may almost be said. When this impulse had spent itself, and the magnificence of youth had passed, there followed a time when the conscience of the nation became a deliberate thing, setting itself to assess the ardours of a day now gone. It was this spirit of argued judgment as distinguished from simple and delighted acceptance, that was at the very roots of the whole Puritan revolution in England. It was not necessarily an angry judgment nor a self-righteous one, nor even a grudging one, but it was judgment, and its high priest was John Milton.

## § I

The outline of Milton's life may be told in a few words. The son of a middle-class family, he was born in London in 1608, was educated at St. Paul's School and Christ's College, Cambridge, where he graduated in 1629, wrote most of his shorter poems, including *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, *Comus* and *Lycidas*, before he was thirty, went on the Continental Tour, and at the age of thirty-two, having become the tutor of his nephews, he seemed to have forsaken poetry for political and social pamphleteering. In 1642 he married Mary Powell; she left him, and in the following year he wrote his pamphlet on *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*. This was censored and he retorted with the famous *Areopagitica* in 1644. In 1649, after the execution of the king, he was made Latin Secretary to the Council of State, and continued his controversial writing with *Eikonoklastes*, a



reply to the king's book, and other essays which contain some of the finest and most vehement, if not best-tempered, prose in the language. His blindness began in 1651, and among his secretarial assistants was the poet Andrew Marvell. Losing his official position at the Restoration, he was for a time in hiding. He married for a second time in 1656, and again a third in 1662. His remaining years were spent partly at Chalfont St. Giles and partly in London; he died at the age of sixty-six in 1674, and was buried in St. Giles's, Cripplegate.

In 1645 he had collected his smaller poems for publication, and a second edition of the volume was issued with additions in 1673. His great works were published, *Paradise Lost* in 1667, and *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* in 1671. He is supposed to have begun writing the first of these as early as 1650, and the story of his dictating his masterpieces to his daughters is well known. His long silence as a poet in the middle of his life is difficult to explain, preoccupied though he may have been with political matters. We may, however, be sure that during the years when he was not actively writing poetry he was meditating the great work in front of him and preparing himself for a task as to the responsibility of which he was very deliberately conscious. His muse was to address itself to "Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme." And, as he tells us in his *Apology for Smectymnuus* (1641), he believed that "He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem."

He came to the composition of the great works of his later years a good scholar, the chief intellectual champion in his country of political and religious freedom, and a man deeply versed in the sorrows and disillusion of life. In taking for his themes the fall of Satan, the redemption of the world by the Son of Man, and the sufferings of Samson, he was following the example of the Greeks in choosing stories which should be familiar to his readers. The mere invention of a fable as an exercise for his genius appealed to him no more than it did to Shakespeare, and he preferred to lavish the vast stores of his energy upon the spiritual and imaginative significance with which the mould of accepted fables could be filled. The literature which has grown up round these poems in itself forms a library of theology, poetics, and philosophy.

## § 2

To attempt anything like an analysis of the vast subject-matter of Milton's writings is here obviously impossible. Of the poetry itself it may at once be said that it cannot be approached profitably in any light or easy mood. Once to have come under the spell of the serene mastery of Milton's genius is to be made free of it for ever. It is impossible once to like Milton's

poetry and then to grow tired of it, but it may well sometimes be that a reader who is happy enough with some tripping or homely muse should find the ceremony of the great Puritan a little difficult, though *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, together with passages from *Comus* and *Lycidas*, can hardly fail to be pleasing to anybody. But for the rest of us there comes a time when the full glory of Milton's last period is a thing in life as inevitable in its authority as the beauty of nature itself. Matthew Arnold's "Others abide our question, thou art free" is as true of the other supreme poets as it is of Shakespeare. If we have the love of English poetry in our blood at all, we can no longer argue about :

Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top  
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire  
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,  
In the beginning how the heav'ns and earth  
Rose out of Chaos ; or if Sion hill  
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flow'd  
Fast by the Oracle of God ; I thence  
Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous song,  
That with no middle flight intends to soar  
Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues  
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer  
Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for thou know'st ; thou from the first  
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread  
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss,  
And mad'st it pregnant : what in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support ;  
That to the height of this great argument  
I may assert eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.

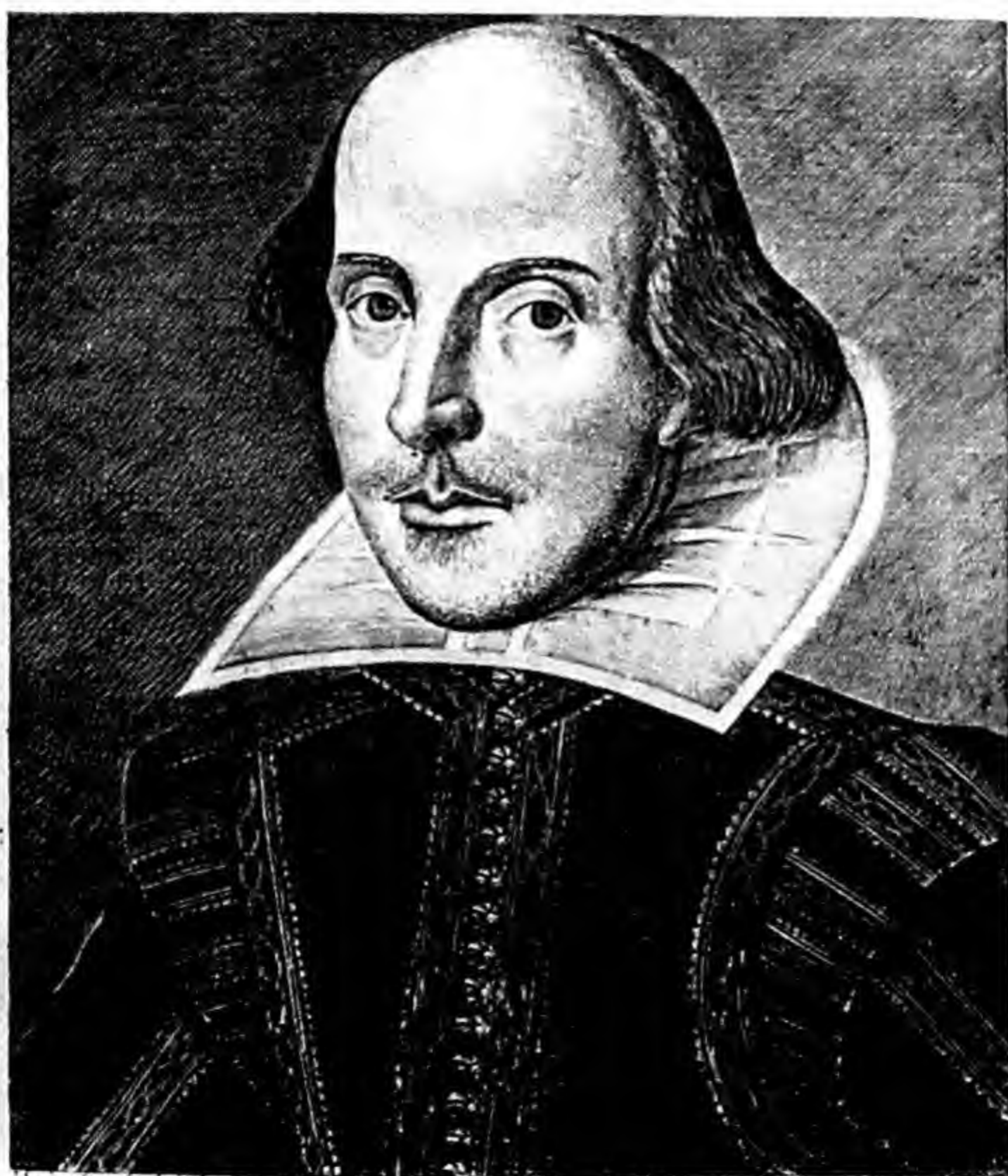
This spiritual exaltation Milton in his later works maintained, with hardly a break, for something like fifteen thousand lines. In doing it he achieved a style which in its union of opulence and severity was at the time, and has remained, without parallel. As always with the great men, the poetry transcends the argument. The argument was indeed a passionate enough conviction with Milton himself, and was the foundation from which the mighty edifice of his poetry rose. But it is the poetry itself that, in the right mood, is a defence against the ignominies of the world as hardly



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AS THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR



Effayes. *Wm. Rogers*  
*31<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1747*

Religious Meditations.

Places of perswasion and  
 dissuasion.

Seene and allowed,



AT LONDON,  
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TITLE-PAGE OF THE FIRST EDITION OF BACON'S ESSAYS



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"THE BLIND MILTON DICTATING PARADISE LOST TO HIS DAUGHTERS," BY MUNKACSY





*By permission of the Fine Arts Society*

"CHRISTIAN FIGHTS APOLLYON," BY WILLIAM STRANG



Being a Discourse of  
**FISH and FISHING,**  
Not unworthy the perusal of most *Anglers*.

*Simon Peter said, I go a fishing and they said, We  
also wil go with thee. John 21. 5.*

*London, Printed by T. Maxey for Rich. MARRIOT, in  
St. Dunstons Church-Yard, Fleet Street, 1653.*

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TITLE-PAGE OF THE FIRST EDITION OF *THE COMPLEAT  
ANGLER*, BY IZAAK WALTON, 1653

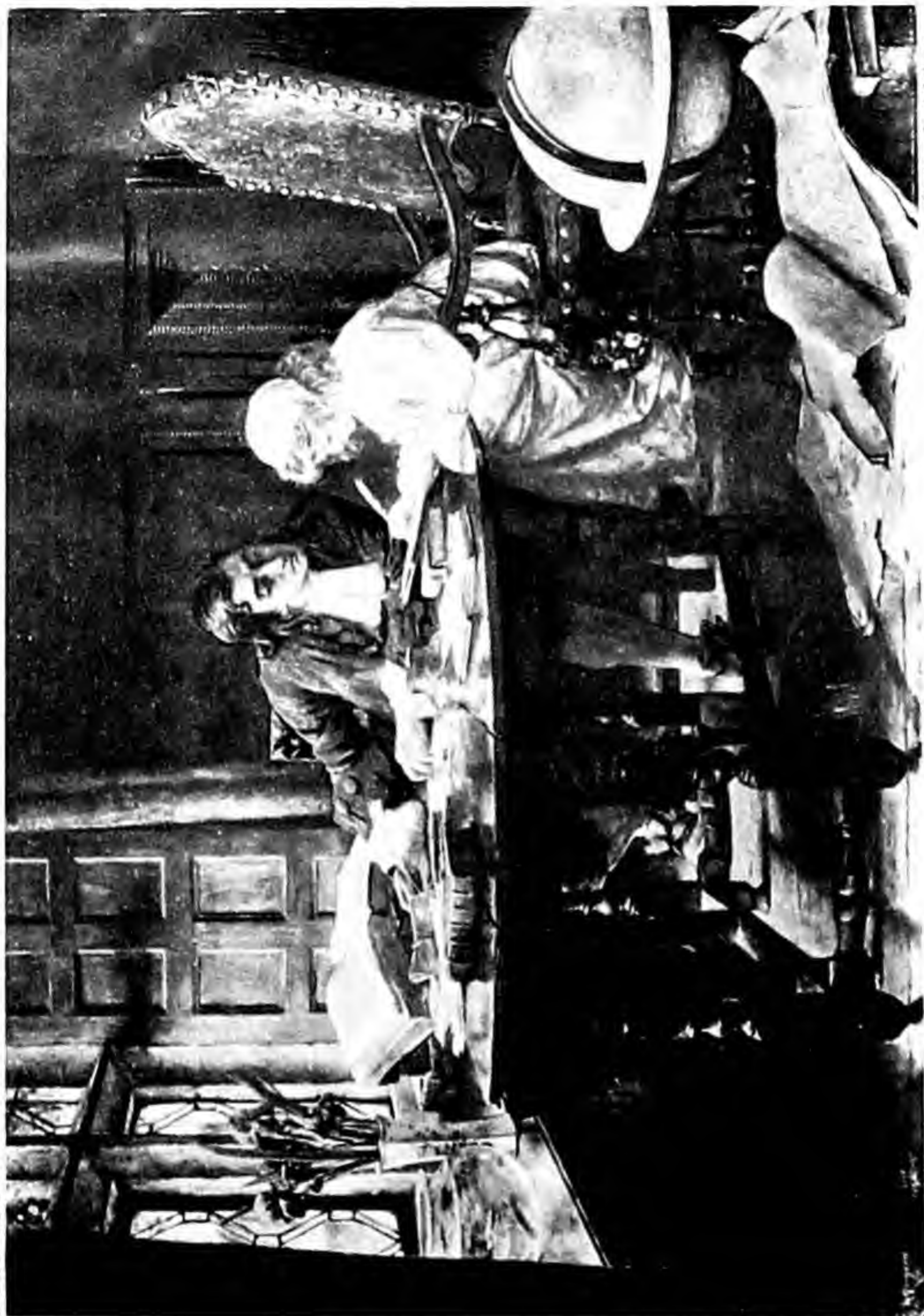




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"LE MALADE IMAGINAIRE," BY C. R. LESLIE, R.A.

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"SWIFT AND STELLA," BY MARGARET ISABEL DICKSEE

Dean Swift first met Stella when she was quite a child. She afterwards became a great and tragic figure in the drama of his life.



any other English poetry is. Milton did very ardently wish to "justify the ways of God to men," to scourge tyranny, and to exalt the undying heroism of man. But in these things he was but one of many thousand generous spirits who have passed on earth, and his testament was made in terms of a mythology and a political temper which in themselves are not very intimately stirring things to us to-day. But, unlike those other thousands, Milton was a great poet, and, as such, he both transcended for ever the conditions of the moment and lifted his personal passion into universal poise by the sublime certainty with which it was embodied. Poise—that is the last word when all critical analysis of Milton has been made. To read *Paradise Lost* or *Samson Agonistes*, without haste and without question, is to look upon the troubled world with untroubled eyes. The purging is not of the same kind as that affected by the great poets of the tragic human emotions, where the salvation is wrought by the spectator being moved to a God-like compassion for suffering or erring man. Reading one of the great Shakespearean tragedies we are so touched to pity that we not only feel that in the course of justice there ought to be some final compensation for the disaster which we have witnessed, but that in some strange way we have been given the power to will that it shall be so. Milton, even in *Samson Agonistes*, where the actual fable is one of human catastrophe, does not move us in quite the same way. Here we feel not so much as we do in Shakespeare's tragedies that when all has been endured mercy will come, as it were, from some common impulse of the world to heal even the most merited suffering, but that the spirit of man can mysteriously rise clear of its own limitations and that man is, in fact, greater than the expression that he can ever give to himself in the conduct of life. Shakespeare's way is the more human, the more passionate, and the more intimately related to our common moods, but there are times when Milton can bring us a reassurance that is altogether his own.

The keen spiritual light that is over all Milton's meditation does not lessen the warmth of his humanity, a quality we are apt to forget was his when we think of him. His early poems, though they are marked already by the ceremony that in the great works was to come to such grandeur of style, are the work of a young poet moving freely about the world, generous and even gay in temper. Whatever his austerity of manner, there was no coldness at the heart of the man who could write :

While the ploughman near at hand  
Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,  
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,  
And the mower whets his scythe,  
And every shepherd tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the dale. . . .

Nor, when *Paradise Lost* appeared more than twenty years later, had the note gone :

So hand in hand they pass'd, the loveliest pair  
That ever since in love's embraces met ;  
Adam the goodliest man of men since born  
His sons, the fairest of her daughters Eve.  
Under a tuft of shade, that on a green  
Stood whisp'ring soft, by a fresh fountain side  
They sat them down ; and after no more toil  
Of their sweet gard'ning labour than sufficed  
To recommend cool Zephyr, and made ease  
More easy, wholesome thirst and appetite  
More grateful, to their supper fruits they fell. . . .

a passage the tenderness of which is recurrent throughout the poem whenever Milton's thought for a moment leaves the height of its great argument and dwells on the human joys and sorrows of Paradise. While, however, he is thus always able to remind us of his command of the gentler things of holiday and pathos, it remains the truth that it is in a sublime philosophic conception of life, rather than in the particular and intimate lives of men and women, that his interest chiefly lies and in the expression of which his mastery is most commonly used.

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,  
Stol'n on his wing my three and twentieth year !  
My hasting days fly on with full career,  
But my late spring no bud or blossom show'th.  
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,  
That I to manhood am arrived so near,  
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,  
That some more timely-happy spirits indu'th.  
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,  
It shall be still in strictest measure even  
To that same lot, however mean or high,  
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven.  
All is, if I have grace to use it so,  
As ever in my great Task-master's eye.

There at twenty-three was already the promise of the poet who in the full maturity of his power was to learn how, by pure majesty of spirit and the very magic of verse, to bring even angels into the range of our human sympathies, as in :

So spake the seraph Abdiel, faithful found,  
Among the faithless, faithful only he :  
Among innumerable false, unmoved,  
Unshaken, unseduced, untterrified,



His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal ;  
 Nor number, nor example with him wrought  
 To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind  
 Though single. . . .

and who, when he brought these faculties to a life still generalised, but nearer to our own experience, as at the end of *Samson Agonistes*, could achieve a moving beauty which has never been excelled in English poetry :

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail  
 Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,  
 Dispraise, or blame, nothing but well and fair,  
 And what may quiet us in a death so noble. . . .

Any page of Milton will furnish examples of his mastery. Our choice might follow Swinburne, who finds an incomparable excellence of diction in the opening of *Lycidas* :

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more  
 Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
 I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,  
 And with forced fingers rude,  
 Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year. . . .

or Keats, who says :

“ There are two specimens of very extraordinary beauty in the *Paradise Lost* : they are of a nature, so far as I have read, unexampled elsewhere ; they are entirely distinct from the brief pathos of Dante, and they are not to be found even in Shakespeare. The one is in line 268, iv :

Not that fair field  
 Of Enna, where Proserpine, gathering flowers,  
 Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis  
 Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain  
 To seek her through the world.

The other is line 32, book vii :

But drive far off the barbarous dissonance  
 Of Bacchus and his revellers, the race  
 Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian bard  
 In Rhodope, where woods and rocks had ears  
 To rapture, till the savage clamour drowned  
 Both harp and voice ; nor could the Muse defend  
 Her son.

These appear exclusively Miltonic, without the shadow of another mind, ancient or modern.”

De Quincey, who held Milton to be the greatest poet of all time—who

somewhere speaks of "the solemn planetary wheelings of the verse of Milton"—selected as "his most tremendous passage perhaps the most sublime, all things considered, that exists in human literature," the lines (273, bk. x), where Death first becomes aware of his own future empire over man :

So saying, with delight he snuffed the smell  
Of mortal change on earth. As when a flock  
Of ravenous fowl, through many a league remote,  
Against the day of battle, to a field,  
Where armies lie encamped, come flying, lured.  
So scented the grim feature, and upturned  
His nostril wide into the murky air,  
Sagacious of his quarry from so far.

## § 3

Although, more perhaps than most poets, Milton allowed a life of affairs to encroach upon his actual poetical position, there is no poet of whom it can be more justly said that he devoted his life to poetry. Having proved his gifts in the early poems, he determined to wait until such time as he felt himself to be equipped for a work that should not only be profound in conception but massive in volume and architecture. "Neither do I think it shame," he writes in the *Reason of Church Government urged against Prelatry* of 1641, "to covenant with any knowing reader that, for some years yet I may go on trust with him toward the payment of whom I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth or the vapours of wine . . . but by devout prayer to that eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge . . . to this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous art and affairs. . . ." Through those years of political and religious controversy his mind was fixed constantly upon the redemption of this promise. The result of all this was that when the works came they were upon a scale that can be no more lightly apprehended by the reader than they were lightly conceived by the poet. Before we can come to anything like the full significance of Milton's great poems we must read them steadily and we must read them whole.

We may for purposes of argument do very well in dividing poets up into schools, Classical, Romantic, Realist, and so forth, but when we come to the very great men we find that in some measure or another they have the best qualities of all these different kinds. Nowhere has the case for the so-called Classic as against the Romantic method been put more lucidly, than in Matthew Arnold's famous *Preface* of 1853.



"We can hardly at the present day understand what Menander meant, when he told a man who inquired as to the progress of his comedy that he had finished it, not having yet written a single line, because he had constructed the action of it in his mind. A modern critic would have assured him that the merit of his piece depended on the brilliant things which arose under his pen as he went along. We have poems which seem to exist merely for the sake of single lines and passages; not for the sake of producing any total-impression. We have critics who seem to direct their attention merely to detached expressions, to the language about the action, not to the action itself. I verily think that the majority of them do not in their hearts believe that there is such a thing as a total-impression to be derived from a poem at all, or to be demanded from a poet; they think the term a commonplace or metaphysical criticism. They will permit the Poet to select any action he pleases, and to suffer that action to go as it will, provided he gratifies them with occasional bursts of fine writing, and with a shower of isolated thoughts and images. That is, they permit him to leave their poetical sense ungratified, provided that he gratifies their rhetorical sense and their curiosity."

This is an admirable piece of æsthetic theory, and it was a point that very much needed to be made, and for that matter still needs to be made to-day in view of the common practice of modern poetry. But the argument is one which when we come to the poets themselves in their poetry—even to Matthew Arnold in his own poetry—we find to need qualification. It is true that certain poets, chiefly lyric poets, do make good their claim to our remembrance almost entirely because of the occasional verbal felicities of which Arnold speaks, and they do not achieve, or, perhaps, even aim at, that "total-impression" which the critic so rightly holds up to admiration. But this does not mean that the poets who are masters of proportion and form on the grand scale are indifferent to the appeal of those same verbal felicities. How, for example, would Arnold account for Keats in his reckoning? The form of the *Odes*, although it is of small dimensions, has decided grandeur, and the "total-impression" is emphatic and lasting. And yet Keats took the greatest pains to "load every rift with ore." There is hardly a line without some exquisite touch of the kind that Arnold, in his enthusiasm for classic purity, seems almost to censure. As I have pointed out, no poetry could be more suggestive in this matter than Arnold's own, where the general effect is always kept in view with scrupulous loyalty to the poet's belief, but where "showers of isolated thoughts and images" are constantly breaking upon the design to our great profit.

In Milton this richness of phrase, beautiful even apart from its context, is constant. "The tann'd haycock in the mead," "the glowing violet,"

"brisk as the April buds in Primrose season," "beauty is Nature's brag," "they also serve who only stand and wait," "the marble air," "And from sweet kernels prest She tempers dulcet creams," "and calm of mind all passion spent"—such things come to the eye on almost any page. Great and essential as the complete design is, it is not difficult ever to make Milton's inspiration clear by short passages, even phrases. But the design remains, to be discovered only by the patient and humble reader. Once to behold it, in all its lordly power and grace, is to rejoice in one of the sublime achievements of English character and of English poetry.

## READING LIST

Milton's *English Poems*, including *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, *Samson Agonistes*, *Early Poems*, etc., 2 vols., edited by R. C. Browne (Oxford University Press).

David Masson's *Life of Milton*.

Sir Walter Raleigh's *Milton* (Arnold).

Mark Pattison's *Milton* in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

J. Bailey's *Milton* in The Home University Library.

Much has recently been done by E. M. W. Tillyard to restore Milton to his rightful place in *The Miltonic Setting, Past and Present*, and *Milton* (Chatto & Windus).

The literature of the period is treated in J. H. B. Masterman's *The Age of Milton* (Bell).

*Milton*, by Rose Macaulay (Duckworth): a scholarly study from the feminist viewpoint.

*Milton and the English Mind*, by F. E. Hutchinson (English Universities Press).

Denis Saurat: *Milton, Man and Thinker* (Dent).



### XIII

## MARVELL AND WALTON

### § 1

**A**NDREW MARVELL, the friend of Milton, is generally called a Puritan poet, although his sympathies were largely with Charles I, and he wrote satires on the Long Parliament. Some of his noblest lines were written on Cromwell's death :

I saw him dead ; a leaden slumber lies,  
And mortal sleep over those wakeful eyes :  
Those gentle rays under the lids were fled,  
Which through his looks that piercing sweetness shed ;  
That port, which so majestic was as strong,  
Loose, and deprived of vigour, stretched along ;  
All withered, all discoloured, pale and wan,  
How much another thing, no more that man !  
O, human glory vain ! O, Death ! O, wings !  
O, worthless world ! O, transitory things !  
Yet dwelt that greatness in his shape decayed,  
That still though dead, greater than Death he laid,  
And in his altered face you something feign  
That threatens Death, he yet will live again.

Marvell was an open-air man, joying in gardens and woods, rivers and birds. No English poet, indeed, has loved nature more than he. Descriptions of the countryside, with observations of its various characteristic features, and appreciations of its peculiar charm and beauty, figure largely throughout English literature. Spenser, Shakespeare, Herrick, and our more recent poets Hardy and Masfield, are but a few of the great writers who, in the course of their works, frequently convey the true spirit, as well as accurate portraits, of country life.

### § 2

There is a group of writers who have specially devoted themselves to portraying and interpreting the sight and sounds and atmosphere of the country and its natural inhabitants.

The first in order of time is Izaak Walton, born in 1593, whose *Compleat*

*Angler* appeared in 1653, the author being then in his sixtieth year. From his youth upwards, his associates were of the cultivated class, his first wife being a descendant of Cranmer, and his second wife half-sister to Thomas Ken, the celebrated Bishop of Bath and Wells. In 1618, we find his name on the roll of the Ironmongers' Company, although what his actual business in London was, is not clear. Whatever it was, it enabled him to retire, free from financial anxiety, in 1644. After his retirement he lived for forty years ; and it was during this period that the *Compleat Angler* and the *Lives* of his friends Donne, Wotton, and other almost equally distinguished men, were written.

The *Compleat Angler* is obviously the work of a writer who had reached the age of serenity. The postscript which appears at the end of the last page, "Study to be Quiet," is the keynote to the whole. It is professedly and, to a large extent actually, a practical handbook of the angler's art ; but it is very much more than that. The book's sub-title, *The Contemplative Man's Recreation*, gives a hint of Walton's attitude both to angling and to life in general ; and, as he says in his Preface, "the whole Discourse is, or rather was, a picture of my own disposition, especially in such days and times as I have laid aside business, and gone a-fishing with honest Nat. and R. Roe." Thus we find pleasantly and whimsically intermingled practical advice on baits, recipes for cooking fish, and reflections on life, the characteristic note of all being one of thankfulness and appreciation. "Well," he says to his companion, "having now taught you to paint your rod, and we having still a mile to Tottenham High Cross, I will, as we walk towards it in the cool shade of this sweet honeysuckle hedge, mention to you some of the thoughts and joys that have possessed my soul since we two met together."

The features of the country that peculiarly appeal to Walton are its quiet and restfulness, its sweetness and peaceful beauty, its calm associations. Although he comments repeatedly on bird and fish, his attitude to them is an anthropomorphic one. He has little of the spirit of the naturalist. He contemplates, rather than studies, nature. He quotes with acquiescence the statements of previous writers on natural history, and rarely observes for himself that the facts are far other. He is so filled with admiration and love of it all that only occasionally he notices the details. His country is the country of the Londoner, but not the Londoner of to-day. He is a citizen of that London,

small and white and clean,  
The clear Thames gliding 'twixt her gardens green,

which had the fields and woods within an easy walk ; whose shopkeepers and merchants were still familiar with country sights and sounds, if not



with the actual detail of country life. The Angler knows the birds and beasts and flowers by look and song and name ; he takes pleasure in the sight of wood and stream, but it is the surface of these things that attracts and strikes him. Country life is to him the milkmaid and her mother singing an old catch among the flowers ; the lavendered sheets in the ale-house ; the barking of the hounds as the otter turns at bay in the water-meadows "chequered with water-lilies and lady-smocks." It is like a beautifully decorated manuscript, where allegory and axiom and morality are pictured in gold and colours, and it matters little to him whether or not his natural history is true in fact, if he can draw from it an example of the love or wisdom of his Maker.

Certainly, his picture of the countryside is one which would turn a man's mind to peace and quietude. There is no hint of the other side of rain and hunger and hard work. His very beggars sit under a honeysuckle hedge propounding riddles and singing songs in turn ; a wet day is only an excuse for a game of shovelboard at an honest ale-house, and a rainy evening gives an opportunity to read "the following Discourse." It is an Arcadian scene, but so charming and so delicately drawn that it almost convinces us of its reality.

No short biography in our literature stands higher than Walton's *Lives* already referred to. The following passage from the life of Sanderson illustrates the homely natural style of Walton :

I met him accidentally in London, in sad-coloured clothes, and, God knows, far from being costly. The place of our meeting was near to Little Britain, where he had been to buy a book, which he then had in his hand. We had no inclination to part presently, and therefore turned to stand in a corner under a pent-house—for it began to rain—and immediately the wind rose, and the rain increased so much, that both became so inconvenient as to force us into a cleanly house, where we had bread, cheese, ale, and a fire for our money. This rain and wind were so obliging to me, as to force our stay there for at least an hour, to my great content and advantage ; for in that time he made to me many useful observations, with much clearness and conscientious freedom.

Walton then relates some of Sanderson's talk. He lamented the Parliament's attacks on the Liturgy and the growing use of extempore prayers in churches.

Walton's *Lives* are not only gems of biography, they are an education in human love and fine feeling. They were one of Dr. Johnson's favourite books ; and Wordsworth wrote of them :

The feather, whence the pen  
Was shaped that traced the lives of these good men,  
Dropped from an Angel's wing.

# READING LIST

Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler*, in the Everyman's Library (Dent) and World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

Walton's *Lives*, World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

*Andrew Marvell*, by the Right Hon. Augustine Birrell, in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

*Marvell's Poems*, 2 vols. (Routledge).

*Andrew Marvell*, by V. Sackville-West (Faber).



## XIV

### JOHN BUNYAN

#### § 1

IF Milton stands in literature for Puritan culture, Bunyan stands for Puritan fervour.

*The Pilgrim's Progress* is a human drama. Most allegories are fantastic, and many of them, including Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, are apt to be tedious. But Bunyan is always dramatic. His allegory is ingenious in its construction and seasoned by homely wit, and it has, as Macaulay said, been "read by many thousands with tears." The critic of letters has been moved by *The Pilgrim's Progress* to enthusiasm. Dr. Johnson hated to read books through, but he made an exception of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Indeed, he wished it were longer.

Bunyan, Macaulay says, was "almost the only writer who ever gave to the abstract the interest of the concrete." His mind was so imaginative that "personifications, when he dealt with them, became men." His mind was so dramatic that a dialogue between two qualities in *The Pilgrim's Progress* has a more convincing realism than "a dialogue between two human beings in most plays." And what a marvel it is that this great book should have been written by a tinker, and the son of a tinker, who himself has told us: "I never went to school, to Aristotle or Plato, but was brought up in my father's house in a very mean condition, among a company of poor countrymen."

Not only was John Bunyan a great writer born with a complete power of expression, he was, and he remains, the spokesman of the people articulate among the generally inarticulate, one of the two great English writers (Dickens was the other) who belonged to the common people, loved the common people, and possessed a perfect knowledge of what the common people dream and hope and fear.

John Bunyan was born at Elstow, a village near Bedford, in 1628; the son of "an honest poor labouring man, who, like Adam unparadised, had all the world to get his bread in, and was very careful to maintain his family." He was sent to the Grammar School at Bedford, where he was taught "to read and write, according to the rate of other poor men's children." After he left school, his father taught him his own trade of a

tinker, and he went on living in Elstow. Bunyan was a passionate and imaginative boy, the ringleader in most of the village mischief. After his conversion he was fond of referring in lurid terms to the wickedness of his youth, but there is little doubt that this wickedness was grotesquely exaggerated. In our days at every Salvation Army meeting, one can hear from the simple converted obviously over-coloured accounts of sins committed in unregenerate days. This is indeed quite natural, nothing more than perfectly harmless vanity, as well as the desire to emphasise the "saving power of grace." Bunyan tells us that he swore and lied and poached and robbed orchards. But he was never drunk, and he more than once declares that he was never unchaste. However great a sinner Bunyan may have been, he suffered grievously for his sins. The English people in the seventeenth century had learned to read the Bible, which they accepted literally, and Bunyan, as a boy, was convinced that the sins he committed would bring him awful and eternal punishment. Like Joan of Arc he had visions, and all his visions were prophecies of torment.

At the beginning of the Civil War Bunyan served as a soldier. His soldiering lasted only a year, and then he went back to Elstow and married. He says :

I lighted on a wife whose father was counted godly. We came together as poor as poor might be, not having so much household stuff as a dish or a spoon between us. But she had for her portion two books, *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practice of Piety*, which her father had left her when he died. In these two books I sometimes read with her. I found some things pleasing to me, but all this while I met with no conviction. She often told me what a godly man her father was, how he would reprove and correct vice both in his house and among his neighbours, what a strict and holy life he lived in his day, both in word and deed. These books, though they did not reach my heart, did light in me some desire to religion.

At this time of his life Bunyan was a regular attendant at the parish church, though "retaining my wicked life." He read the Bible, grieved for his sins, and was miserably unhappy, finding nowhere any hope or any satisfaction. Then light came to him miraculously as it came to St. Paul. He writes :

One day as I was travelling into the country, musing on the wickedness of my heart, and considering the enmity that was in me to God, the Scripture came into my mind, "He hath made peace through the blood of His cross." I saw that the justice of God and my sinful soul could embrace and kiss each other. I was ready to swoon, not with grief and trouble, but with solid joy and peace.

Bunyan joined the Baptist congregation in Bedford, and was baptized in the River Ouse. Soon after his conversion, Bunyan began to preach,



and in a very short time he gained a great reputation among the sects which in the middle of the seventeenth century were, as Froude says, "springing up all over England as weeds in a hotbed."

The Act of Uniformity, passed after the Restoration, made the meetings of the Protestant sects illegal, and also made non-attendance at the parish church a crime. The meeting-houses were shut up, and the Dissenters met together for worship in woods and outhouses, always fearing arrest. Bunyan himself was arrested on November 12, 1660.

The Bedford magistrates were most unwilling to send Bunyan to prison. They tried hard to persuade him to promise not to preach in public, but Bunyan would make no compromise, and would give no promises. And most reluctantly the magistrates committed him to Bedford gaol, where he stayed for twelve years. The imprisonment of Bunyan is a curious story. Not only the local magistrates, but even the High Court judges in London, tried in vain to get him out of prison. He could have left at any moment by giving a simple promise, but this was against his conscience. After six years he was actually released under the Declaration of Indulgence, and was promptly re-arrested for preaching. After another six years the policy of the Government changed, and one of the most famous imprisonments in history came to an end. It seems perfectly clear that the rigour of his punishment has been grossly exaggerated. His family and his friends were allowed to see him whenever they liked; he was permitted to preach in prison—since that was a private place—he was even able to go out of the prison practically every day. Without these years of restricted activity Bunyan would probably never have been anything more than an effective and successful preacher. Prison gave him time to read, to think, and to write. In Bedford gaol Bunyan read and reread the Bible, read Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, George Herbert's devotional poems, and probably the *Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost*. In Bedford gaol he wrote *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, and the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan was released on May 8, 1672. He was then forty-four years old.

## § 2

In the years that followed his imprisonment, Bunyan wrote a *Discourse upon Anti-Christ*, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and *The Holy War*, as well as a considerable quantity of verse. The verse, if never poetry of any value, is often ingenious, neat, and quaint.

*Grace Abounding* is an autobiography detailing the spiritual struggles which have already been described. *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*



consists of a dialogue between Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Attentive, in which we are told the story of an unscrupulous and successful scoundrel who lived evilly and died unrepentant. Although Bunyan knew nothing about art, he was instinctively too fine an artist to spoil his story, interesting and valuable as a picture of English life under the later Stuarts, by a melodramatic death-bed repentance :

When he drew near his end, there was no more alteration in him than what was made by his disease upon his body. He was the selfsame Mr. Badman still, not only in name, but in condition, and to the very day of his death and the moment in which he died. There seemed not to be in it to the standers by so much as a strong struggle of nature. He died like a lamb, or, as men call it, like a chrisom child, quietly and without fear.

*The Holy War* is a much more involved and a much less effective allegory than *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It is a description of the struggle for the possession of the city of Mansoul between the forces of Evil and the forces of Good, between the Devil and Christ. The actors in the drama are virtues and vices. The narrative is too long. It would have been more effective if it had concluded with the capture of Mansoul by Emmanuel and the defeat and punishment of the Diabolians. But Bunyan evidently wanted to impress his readers with the fact that until the day of his death the Christian is liable to the assaults of the devil. The trouble with *The Holy War* is that it is not easy to determine exactly what Bunyan meant. Froude says :

Here lies the real weakness of *The Holy War*. It may be looked at either as the war in the soul for each sinner that is saved, or as the war for the deliverance of humanity. Under the first aspect it leaves out of sight the large majority of mankind who are not supposed to be saved, and out of whom, therefore, Diabolus is not driven at all. Under the other aspect the struggle is still unfinished ; the last act of the drama has still to be played, and we know not what the conclusion is to be.

### § 3

*The Pilgrim's Progress* was first published in 1678, as has been said, the first and infinitely the better part having been written in Bedford gaol. After the Bible, it is the most popular book in the English language, and there is no need to recall the incidents of Christian's journey to the Delectable Land. *The Pilgrim's Progress* has been translated into every language, and it remains the most beautiful description of Christian experience. Mark Rutherford called Bunyan the poet of Puritanism. He was even more than that, for, with some small excisions, all Christendom has found *The Pilgrim's Progress* not only fine literature but an ethical and mystical stimulant. The story opens with a passage of fine dramatic simplicity :



"As I walked through the wilderness of this world I lighted on a certain place where was a Den, and I laid me down in that place to sleep; and as I slept I dreamed a dream."

It is interesting to compare this passage with Dante's: "In the middle of life's journey I found myself in a darkling wood, where the traces of the straight path were lost."

One of the most dramatic incidents of the pilgrimage occurred when Christian reached the Valley of Humiliation, where he was confronted by the foul fiend, Apollyon. At first the pilgrim had a mind to go back. But he reflected that "he had no armour for his back" and that it was, therefore, safer to go forward. After a long conversation the fiend swore to "spill" Christian's soul:

And with that he threw a flaming dart at his breast; but Christian had a shield in his hand, with which he caught it, and so prevented the danger of that.

Then did Christian draw, for he saw it was time to bestir him: and Apollyon as fast made at him, throwing darts as thick as hail; by which, notwithstanding all that Christian could do to avoid it, Apollyon wounded him in his head, his hand, and foot. This made Christian give a little back; Apollyon, therefore, followed his work amain, and Christian again took courage, and resisted as manfully as he could. This sore combat lasted for above half a day, even till Christian was almost quite spent; for you must know that Christian, by reason of his wounds, must needs grow weaker and weaker.

Then Apollyon, espying his opportunity, began to gather up close to Christian, and wrestling with him, gave him a dreadful fall; and with that Christian's sword flew out of his hand. Then said Apollyon, I am sure of thee now. And with that he had almost pressed him to death, so that Christian began to despair of life; but as God would have it, while Apollyon was fetching of his last blow, thereby to make a full end of this good man, Christian nimbly stretched out his hand for his sword, and caught it, saying, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall I shall arise" (Mic. vii. 8); and with that he gave him a deadly thrust, which made him give back, as one that had received his mortal wound. Christian perceiving that, made at him again, saying, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. viii. 37). And with that Apollyon spread forth his dragon's wings, and sped him away, that Christian for a season saw him no more (Jas. iv. 7).

The passage in which Bunyan describes the end of Christian's pilgrimage is instinct with unforced beauty:

Thus, therefore, they walked on together; and as they walked, ever and anon these trumpeters, even with joyful sound, would, by mixing their music with looks and gestures, still signify to Christian and his brother, how welcome they were into their company and with what gladness they came to meet them; and now were these two men, as it were, in heaven, before they came at it, being swallowed up with the sight of angels, and with hearing of their melodious notes. Here also they had the city itself in view, and they thought they heard

all the bells therein to ring, to welcome them thereto. But above all, the warm and joyful thoughts that they had about their own dwelling there, with such company, and that for ever and ever. Oh, by what tongue or pen can their glorious joy be expressed ! And thus they came up to the gate.

In the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* Bunyan describes how Christian's wife and family made the same journey, met the same difficulties, and reached the same goal. Froude is unquestionably right when he points out that in this sequel Bunyan's simplicity is marred by a certain mawkish sentimentality. There are, however, many magnificent passages in this second part. In all English literature there is no finer and more inspiring description of the death of the good man than Bunyan's "So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

Bunyan died in 1688. He had travelled on horseback from Bedford to Reading in order to endeavour to compose a family quarrel. He succeeded, but on his journey back he was caught in a storm, which brought on a fever, and he died at a friend's house in London. He was buried in Bunhill Fields. His last words were : "Take me, for I come to Thee."

## READING LIST

*John Bunyan : his Life, Times, and Work*, by Dr. John Brown, 2 vols. (Pitman).

*The Pilgrim's Progress*, with *Grace Abounding*, etc. (Oxford University Press).

*The Holy War* (R.T.S. and S.P.C.K.) and *The Heavenly Footman* (Gowans).

Macaulay's *Essay on Bunyan*, and the *Life*, by James Anthony Froude. Miss M. P. Willcocks has recently written a fascinating study.



## XV

### PEPYS, DRYDEN, AND THE RESTORATION DRAMATISTS

#### § I

#### PEPYS

**S**AMUEL PEPYS was born in 1633. His father was a shiftless, muddle-headed man who, after being for some years an unsuccessful tailor in London, retired to a village near Huntingdon, where he had inherited a small estate which brought him an income of eighty pounds a year. Samuel was educated at St. Paul's School in London and at Magdalene College, Cambridge; and when he was twenty-two, having little money and no prospects, he married the daughter of an impecunious Protestant refugee who was as irresponsible and unsuccessful as Samuel's father himself.

Soon after his marriage Sir Edward Montagu, afterwards Lord Sandwich, who was a connection of the Pepys family, engaged Samuel as a sort of confidential secretary, and he and his wife were given rooms in Montagu's London house. Years after, Pepys recalled how his wife used "to make coal fires, and wash my foul clothes with her own hands," in the early days of their married life.

Pepys held the appointment of "Clerk of the Acts of the Navy," and in 1673 he was appointed Secretary of the Admiralty, retaining his office until the Revolution of 1688 ended his official career. In 1690 he suffered a short imprisonment in the Tower on a charge of being concerned in some Jacobite intrigue. He died in his house at Clapham in 1703.

His famous Diary was begun in January 1660 and the last entry was made on May 31, 1669, increasing trouble with his eyes preventing the diarist from making further entries. It was written in the system of shorthand invented by one Shelton in 1641, and apparently, in order to keep the more intimate records secret, the shorthand was interspersed with foreign words. The Diary fills six notebooks of about five hundred pages each, the first being an octavo and the rest small quartos. On his death, Pepys left all his papers to Magdalene College, and there they remained unread until 1818. The manuscript was deciphered between 1819 and 1822, and the first edition of Pepys's Diary was published in 1825—a hundred and twenty-two years after his death.

In many respects Pepys's Diary is unique in literature. It contains many passages of intense human and literary interest, in which a very ordinary man has revealed the secret places of the heart. Such self-revealers as St. Augustine, Rousseau, and Bunyan were extraordinary men. But the peculiar charm and value of Pepys is that he was an everyday man who, with infinite labour and infinite enjoyment, recorded the small doings of his daily life. The Diary is amazingly candid ; if nothing is said in malice, certainly nothing is extenuated. He made no attempt to hide his meannesses, his infidelities, or his quarrels with his wife, nor does he hide the fact that he thoroughly enjoyed his peccadilloes. Indeed, the outstanding fact about Pepys is that he thoroughly enjoyed his life, and that he obtained a sort of second enjoyment from recording its incidents, great and small, all of which had given him intense satisfaction.

Although he was a public official, frequently brought into contact with Charles II, and for years working in the Navy Office in close association with the Duke of York, afterwards James II, he never was inside court circles. He lived the life of an industrious, fairly honest, middle-class public official, neat, tidy, and industrious, troubled a good deal by his impecunious relations and his wife's improvidence, and as eager to save money as to have a good time. As became a good citizen, Pepys loved a good dinner ; nothing pleased him more than to record a satisfactory menu. He wrote in April 1663 :

Very merry at, before, and after dinner, and the more for that my dinner was great, and most neatly dressed by our own only maid. We had a fricassee of rabbits and chickens, a leg of mutton boiled, three carps in a dish, a great dish of a side of lamb, a dish of roasted pigeons, a dish of four lobsters, three tarts, a lamprey pie (a most rare pie), a dish of anchovies, good wine of several sorts, and all things mighty noble and to my great content.

Such an entry throws a vivid light on the manners and appetites of the seventeenth century ; but it must be remembered that Pepys had only one meal a day. In his day this meal was generally eaten at noon, and was followed by nothing more than the lightest of suppers.

The relations between Pepys and his wife have an intense human interest. He was constantly jealous of her without cause, and he loved to recapitulate the circumstances that would have given her, on her side, ample justification for jealousy. As it happened she was stupid and unsuspecting, until on one unhappy occasion she discovered him making love to her maid. She denounced him as "all the false, rotten-hearted rogues of the world," and he confessed that "I did endure the sorrow of her threats, vows, and curses all the afternoon."

After his appointment to the Navy Office, Pepys lived in a house close



to Tower Hill between Crutched Friars and Seething Lane, and he was there during the Plague and the Great Fire, both of which he describes at length in the Diary. Love-making, theatregoing, and music were Pepys's chief delights. He frequented the taverns of the time mainly for society, for he was by no means intemperate, and he was too frugal to gamble. He shared the common Restoration contempt for Shakespeare. He considered *Romeo and Juliet* the worst play he had ever seen; he called *Othello* "a mean thing," and he declared that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was "the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw." The staid and respectable Evelyn had the same opinion of Shakespeare, remarking once after seeing *Hamlet* that "the old plays begin to disgust in this refined age." According to the Diary Pepys saw a hundred and thirty-five different plays, many of them several times. Theatre prices in his day were a shilling, one and six, and two and six. Four shillings was the price of a seat in the upper boxes, but Pepys was never guilty of this extravagance till 1667. In 1661 he went to see one of Beaumont and Fletcher's comedies, and he notes that it was "the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage." He entirely approved of the innovation, eulogising Nell Gwynne's performance in Dryden's *Secret Love*, and praising an actress called Mrs. Knipp as an "excellent mad-humoured thing." Evelyn, by the way, as became his stolid respectability, was of an entirely different opinion. In 1666 he wrote in his Diary: "Very seldom going to the public theatres for many reasons now as they were abused to an atheistical liberty; foul and indecent women now (and never till now) permitted to appear and act."

The common idea of a "good time" in the reign of Charles II may be gathered from the entry in Pepys's Diary of August 14, 1666:

After dinner, with my wife and Mercer to the Beare Garden; where I have not been, I think, of many years, and saw some good sport of the bull's tossing the dogs—one into the very boxes. But it is a very rude and nasty pleasure. We had a great many hectors in the same box, and one very fine went into the pit, and played his dog for a wager; which was a strange sport for a gentleman; where they drank wine, and drank Mercer's health first; which I pledged with my hat off. We supped at home, and very merry. And then about nine to Mrs. Mercer's gate, where the fire and boys expected us, and her son had provided abundance of serpents and rockets; and there mighty merry, my Lady Pen and Pegg going thither with us, and Nan Wright, till about twelve at night, flinging out fireworks, and burning one another, and the people over the way.

And, at last, our business being most spent, we went into Mrs. Mercer's, and there mighty merry, smutting one another with candle grease and soot, till most of us were like devils. And that being done, then we broke up, and to my house; and there I made them drink, and upstairs we went, and then fell into dancing, W. Batelier dancing well; and dressing, him and I, and one Mr.



Banister, who, with my wife, came over also with us, like women ; and Mercer put on a suit of Tom's, like a boy, and mighty mirth we had, and Mercer danced a jig ; and Nan Wright and my wife and Peggy Pen put on periwigs. Thus we spent till three or four in the morning, mighty merry ; and then parted, and to bed.

Pepys was a good-natured materialist, caring not a little for the good things of this world, but he was not without a certain sincere religion ; and while he had little culture and cared little for books, he had a genuine love for music, playing himself on the flageolet. He describes, in 1667, the effect that music has upon him :

With my wife to the King's House, to see *The Virgin Martyr*, the first time it hath been acted a great while ; and it is mighty pleasant ; not that the play is worth much, but it is finely acted by Beck Marshall. But that which did please me beyond anything in the whole world was the wind-music when the Angel comes down, which is so sweet that it ravished me, and indeed, in a word, did wrap up my soul so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife ; that neither then, nor all the evening going home, and at home, I was able to think of anything, but remained all night transported, so as I could not believe that ever any musick hath that real command over the soul of a man as did this upon me : and makes me resolve to practice wind-music, and to make my wife do the like.

The following are some characteristic extracts from the Diary, selected as revealing Pepys's qualities, prejudices, and manner of life. Mr. Pepys minutely records domestic happenings.

(Lord's day.) To church, and Mr. Mills made a good sermon : so home to dinner. My wife and I all alone to a leg of mutton, the sawce of which being made sweet, I was angry at, and eat none, but only dined upon the marrow-bone that we had beside.

Waking this morning out of my sleep on a sudden, I did with my elbow hit my wife a great blow over the neck and face, which waked her with pain, at which I was sorry, and to sleep again.

Home, and found all well, only myself somewhat vexed at my wife's neglect in leaving of her scarfe, waistcoate, and night-dressings in the coach, to-day, that brought us from Westminster ; though, I confess, she did give them to me to look after. It might be as good as 25s. loss.

(Lord's day.) I and my wife up to her closet, to examine her kitchen accounts, and there I took occasion to fall out with her, for her buying a laced handkercher and pinner without my leave. From this we began both to be angry, and so continued till bed.

Dined in my wife's chamber, she being much troubled with the toothake, and I staid till a surgeon of hers come, one Leeson, who had formerly drawn her mouth, and he advised her to draw it ; so I to the Office, and by and by word is come that she hath drawn it, which pleased me, it being well done. So I home, to comfort her.



The following are some of his reflections on books :

Up by 4 o'clock in the morning, and read Cicero's Second Oration against Catiline, which pleased me exceedingly ; and more I discern therein than ever I thought was to be found in him ; but I perceive it was my ignorance, and that he is as good a writer as ever I read in my life.

I away to my boat, and up with it as far as Barne Elmes, reading of Mr. Evelyn's late new book against Solitude, in which I do not find much excess of good matter, though it be pretty for a bye discourse.

To the Strand, to my bookseller's, and there bought an idle, rogueish French book, which I have bought in plain binding, avoiding the buying of it better bound, because I resolve, as soon as I have read it, to burn it, that it may not stand in the list of books, nor among them, to disgrace them if it should be found.

Pepys was a regular churchgoer and a stern critic of sermons :

(Lord's day.) A most tedious, unreasonable, and impertinent sermon, by an Irish doctor. His text was, " Scatter them, O Lord, that delight in warr." Sir W. Batten and I very much angry with the parson.

To church, and had a good plain sermon. At our coming in, the country-people all rose with so much reverence ; and when the parson begins, he begins, " Right Worshipfull and dearly beloved " to us.

Pepys lived in troubled times, and wisely kept away from politics. He records, however, the more striking political events that followed the Restoration.

I went out to Charing Cross, to see Major-General Harrison hanged, drawn, and quartered ; which was done there, he looking as cheerful as any man could do in that condition. He was presently cut down, and his head and heart shown to the people, at which there was great shouts of joy. It is said, that he said that he was sure to come shortly at the right hand of Christ to judge them that now had judged him ; and that his wife do expect his coming again. Thus it was my chance to see the King beheaded at White Hall, and to see the first blood shed in revenge for the King at Charing Cross.

I saw several poor creatures carried by, by constables, for being at a conventicle. They go like lambs, without any resistance. I would to God they would either conform, or be more wise, and not be caught !

The theatre was Pepys's passion. Here are a few of the many references to it in the Diary :

To the Theatre, and there saw *Argalus and Parthenia*, where a woman acted Parthenia, and came afterwards on to the stage in men's clothes, and had the best legs that ever I saw, and I was very well pleased with it.

Went to the Duke's house, the first play I have been at these six months, according to my last vowe, and here saw the so much cried-up play of *Henry the Eighth*, which, though I went with resolution to like it, is so simple a thing,

made up of a great many patches, that, besides the shows and processions in it, there is nothing in the world good or well done.

To the Duke's house, and saw *Macbeth*, which though I saw it lately, yet appears a most excellent play in all respects, but especially in divertisement, though it be a deep tragedy; which is a strange perfection in a tragedy, it being most proper here, and suitable.

To the King's house, and there saw *The Taming of a Shrew*, which hath some very good pieces in it, but generally is but a mean play.

To the King's playhouse, to see an old play of Shirly's, called *Hide Park*; the first day acted.

Pepys's epitaph was finely and justly written by Evelyn:

"This day died Mr. Sam Pepys, a very worthy, industrious, and curious person, none in England exceeding him in knowledge of the navy, in which he had passed thro' all the most considerable offices, Clerk of the Acts and Secretary of the Admiralty, all which he performed with great integrity. When K. James II went out of England he laid down his office, and would serve no more, but withdrawing himselfe from all public affaires, he liv'd at Clapham with his partner Mr. Hewer, formerly his clerk, in a very noble and sweet place, where he enjoyed the fruits of his labours in greate prosperity. He was universally belov'd, hospitable, generous, learned in many things, skill'd in music, a very greate cherisher of learned men of whom he had the conversation."

## § 2

### EVELYN'S DIARY

John Evelyn was a man of very different calibre. He was born in 1620 and lived till 1706. He was a member of a well-to-do family whose seat was in Dorking. Naturally a Royalist, he was prevented by a series of extraordinarily happy accidents from fighting with the Cavaliers, and he spent three of the troubled years of the Puritan Revolution in making a grand tour of Europe, the events of which are recorded in the first part of the Diary.

Returning to England, he went to live at Sayes Court in Deptford, spending most of the rest of his life "minding his books and his garden." Although Evelyn lived in the seventeenth century, he had all the eighteenth-century love of artificiality. He disliked the forest of Fontainebleau because of its "hideous rocks." The Alps did not move him, but a "trim garden" filled him with extraordinary delight. He loved tortoises and apairies and labyrinths—all the absolute artificiality which Horace Walpole also loved in his time. Horace Walpole, by the way, had a natural and intense admiration for Evelyn.



Evelyn lived an uneventful, useful, and dignified life, and the value of his Diary is that, as Pepys tells us how the average uncultured seventeenth-century citizens lived, so Evelyn tells us how the God-fearing country gentleman lived, what he thought, and what were his prejudices and limitations. Evelyn occasionally went to court, and for a while held public office; but he was equally out of sympathy with the raffishness of Charles II and the bigotry of his brother James.

We give an extract from the Diary which describes the Great Fire of London:

I went this morning on foote from White-hall as far as London Bridge, thro' the late Fleete Street, Ludgate Hill, by St. Paules, Cheapeside, Exchange, Bishops-gate, Aldersgate, and out to Moorefields, thence thro' Cornhill, &c. with extraordinary difficulty, clambering over heaps of yet smoking rubbish, and frequently mistaking where I was. The ground under my feete so hot, that it even burnt the soles of my shoes. In the mean time his Majesty got to the Tower by water, to demolish the houses about the graff, which being built intirely about it, had they taken fire and attack'd the White Tower where the magazine of powder lay, would undoubtedly not only have beaten downe and destroyed all the bridge, but sunke and torne the vessells in the river, and render'd the demolition beyond all expression for several miles about the countrey.

At my returne I was infinitely concern'd to find that goodly Church St. Paules now a sad ruine, and the beautifull portico (for structure comparable to any in Europe, as not long before repair'd by the late King), now rent in pieces, flakes of vast stone split asunder, and nothing remaining intire but the inscription in the architrave, shewing by whom it was built, which had not one letter of it defac'd. It was astonishing to see what immense stones the heate had in a manner calcin'd, so that all the ornaments, columnes, freezes, capitals, and projectures of massie Portland stone flew off, even to the very roofe, where a sheet of lead covering a great space (no lesse than 6 akers by measure) was totally mealted; the ruines of the vaulted roofe falling broke into St. Faith's, which being fill'd with the magazines of bookes belonging to the Stationers, and carried thither for safety, they were all consum'd, burning for a weeke following.

It is observable that the lead over the altar at the East end was untouch'd, and among the divers monuments, the body of one Bishop remain'd intire. Thus lay in ashes that most venerable Church, one of the most antient pieces of early piety in the Christian world, besides neere 100 more. The lead, yron worke, bells, plate, &c. mealted; the exquisitely wrought Mercers Chapell, the sumptuous Exchange, the august fabriq of Christ Church, all the rest of the Companies Halls, splendid buildings, arches, enteries, all in dust; the fountaines dried up and ruin'd, whilst the very waters remain'd boiling; the voragos of subterranean cellars, wells, and dungeons, formerly warehouses, still burning in stench and dark clouds of smoke, so that in five or six miles traversing about, I did not see one loade of timber unconsum'd, nor many stones but what were calcin'd white as snow. The people who now walk'd about the ruines appear'd like men in some dismal desart, or rather in some greate Citty laid waste by a cruel enemy; to which was added the stench that came from some poor



creatures bodies, beds, and other conbustible goods. . . . Nor was I yet able to passe through any of the narrower streetes, but kept the widest ; the ground and aire, smoake and fiery vapour, continu'd so intense that my haire was almost sing'd, and my feete unsufferably surbated. The bie lanes and narrower streetes were quite fill'd up with rubbish, nor could one have possibly knowne where he was, but by the ruines of some Church or Hall, that had some remarkable tower or pinnacle remaining. I then went towards Islington and Highgate, where one might have scene 200,000 people of all ranks and degree, dispers'd and lying along by their heapes of what they could save from the fire, deploring their losse, and tho' ready to perish for hunger and destitution, yet not asking one pennie for reliefe, which to me appear'd a stranger sight than any I had yet beheld.

## § 3

## SAMUEL BUTLER

Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* is an "epic satire" on the extravagancies of the Puritans who were triumphant during the Commonwealth and became objects of popular dislike with the Restoration. Butler was born in Worcestershire in 1612. He took no personal part in the Civil War and was one of the many literary men of the time who were content to be spectators of the struggle between Parliament and King. Samuel Butler has been described by Andrew Lang as "a retired, bookish, sardonic humorist."

Pepys tells us that *Hudibras* was the most popular book of the day. Despite its popularity its author apparently received little financial benefit from it and, despite his devotion to the Royalist party, he received nothing from the king. Dryden said very bitterly, "It is enough for our age to have neglected Mr. Cowley and starved Mr. Butler."

Butler was influenced by Cervantes. *Hudibras* is the Presbyterian Don Quixote ; Ralph, his squire, is an Independent Sancho Panza. The extravagancies of the Puritans are gibbeted with humour and learning. Referring to the Civil War and to the Puritans' love for change, Butler wrote :

Call fire and sword and desolation  
A godly thorough Reformation,  
Which always must be carried on,  
And still be doing, never done,  
As if Religion were intended  
For nothing else than to be mended. . . .

Perhaps the best-known of Butler's lines are those in which he refers to the people who

Compound for sins they are inclined to  
By damning those they have no mind to :  
Still so perverse and opposite  
As if they worshipped God for spite.



## § 4

## JOHN DRYDEN

Our knowledge of John Dryden, a great poet, who could also write a fine, flexible kind of prose, is strangely shadowy. He came of a family of some distinction in Northamptonshire, was born in 1631, and was educated at Westminster School and Trinity, Cambridge, taking his degree in 1654. For the rest we must depend for our portrait of the man-in-himself on a few anecdotes, some of them heard at third or fourth hand. Our first introduction to Dryden as a living human being comes from the lively Pepys. On February 3, 1664, Pepys tells us that he stopped at Will's and met there "Dryden, the poet I knew at Cambridge," and all the wits of the town. The company pleased the diarist, and he thinks "it will be good coming hither." The picture of "glorious John" at Will's, which Scott has made famous, is probably true to fact, and, as Professor Saintsbury says, there is no harm in thinking of Dryden in the great coffee-house, with his chair in the balcony in summer, by the fire in winter, passing criticisms and paying good-natured compliments on matters literary. We know also that he was fond of fishing, took a deal of snuff, did not drink much till led to do so by Addison, and had a very vulgar stomach, preferring a chine of bacon even to marrow puddings.

Dryden was the most various poet of his age. In "Absolom and Achitophel" (1681) we have the first polished satire in the language. Hitherto satire had been shrewd rough-and-ready quarter-staff play (as in Butler's *Hudibras*) or rugged versification (as in much of Marvell's and Donne's) through which the rhymes ring like breastplates smitten with a broadsword. Here is the famous character of Zimri (George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham) from this truly wonderful poem :

A man so various that he seemed to be  
Not one, but all mankind's epitome ;  
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,  
Was everything by starts and nothing long ;  
But in the course of one revolving moon  
Was chymist, fiddler, statesman and buffoon ;  
Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,  
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.  
Blest madman, who could every hour employ  
With something new to wish or to enjoy !  
Railing and praising were his usual themes,  
And both, to show his judgment, in extremes,

So over violent or over civil  
That every man with him was God or Devil.  
In squandering wealth was his peculiar art ;  
Nothing went unrewarded but desert.  
Beggared by fools whom still he found too late,  
He had his jest, and they had his estate.

The wealth of irony, the sting in each couplet, the Shavian superciliousness of the banter—these were new things in English verse, and even Pope never surpassed Dryden's technique of obloquy. *MacFlecknoe* (1682) followed in the same mode, and the immortal flagellation of the dull and industrious Shadwell is as well known as the character of Buckingham. Flecknoe, absolute in all the realms of nonsense, settles which of his many sons shall succeed :

Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,  
Mature in dullness from his tender years ;  
Shadwell, alone, of all my sons, is he  
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.  
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence  
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.

Afterwards, in the second part of "Absalom and Achitophel" he assails Og (Shadwell) once again with Doeg (Settle) :

Who by my muse to all succeeding times  
Shall live, in spite of their own doggerel rhymes.

"Religio Laici," which Scott regarded as one of the most admirable poems in the language, is a lively argument in verse on the credibility of the Christian faith and on the merits of the Church of England as a midway course, avoiding extremes, which had become an immortal institution because "common quiet is mankind's concern."

What, then, is chiefly left in Dryden for a reader of to-day ? His many plays are hardly literature, and at any rate are dead. But his "Fables," which are long stories told in verse, are not excelled, as narratives, in any language. The reader who takes up "Cymon and Iphigenia," or "Palamon and Arcite," is not likely to lay down the book until he has reached the end. They are little epics, and, in their finest passages, come nearer to the style of Homer than any other poems. His noble Odes will also be remembered, of which he thought "Alexander's Feast" the best, and indeed his most perfect poem. But the "Song for St. Cecilia's Day" is quite as fine, and the well-known lines upon the Birth of Music were never equalled by him in their sweet and noble beauty :

When Jubal struck the chorded shell  
His listening brethren stood around,  
And, wondering, on their faces fell  
To worship that celestial sound.



Less than a god they thought there could not dwell  
 Within the hollow of that shell  
 Which spoke so sweetly and so well.

Johnson, on the other hand, pronounced the "Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew" the noblest in the English tongue, and the following magnificent passage from it, as glorious a piece of stately word-music as is to be discovered in the long interval between Milton and Wordsworth, aptly closes this account of one of the greatest of English poets :

Thou youngest virgin-daughter of the skies,  
 Made in the last promotion of the blessed ;  
 Whose palms, new plucked from Paradise,  
 In spreading branches more sublimely rise,  
 Rich with immortal green above the rest :  
 Whether, adopted to some neighbouring star,  
 Thou rollest above us, in thy wandering race,  
 Or, in procession fixed and regular  
 Movest with the heaven's majestic pace ;  
 Or, called to more superior bliss,  
 Thou treadest with seraphims the vast abyss :  
 Whatever happy region is thy place,  
 Cease thy celestial song a little space ;  
 Thou wilt have time enough for hymns divine,  
 Since Heaven's eternal year is thine.  
 Hear, then, a mortal Muse thy praise rehearse,  
 In no ignoble verse ;  
 But such as thy own voice did practise here,  
 When thy first fruits of Poesy were given,  
 To make thyself a welcome inmate there ;  
 While yet a young probationer,  
 And candidate of heaven.

## § 5

## THE RESTORATION DRAMATISTS

The theatre, which had been banned during the Puritan rule in England, came back to its own with the restoration of Charles II. Later seventeenth-century opinion held Shakespeare in small esteem, and the older plays of Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Shirley soon gave way to a new order of drama that was the creation of the spirit of the new times. While Charles II was reigning in England, Molière was writing in France, and it was natural and inevitable that the Restoration dramatists should have been influenced by the great French master of comedy. What they did not

borrow from France was directly inspired by the atmosphere of the court of Charles II. Charles Lamb insisted that the old comedy "has no reference whatever to the world that is." That is happily true: but it had a very considerable reference to the world that existed when the second Charles frivelled at Whitehall. William Congreve was the most considerable of the Restoration dramatists. Swinburne declared that his *The Way of the World* is "the unequalled and unapproached masterpiece of English comedy: the one play in our language which may fairly claim a place beside, or but just beneath, the mightiest work of Molière." Voltaire, who had heard of his genius, called on him during his stay in England, and Congreve expressed a wish not to be regarded as a dramatist but as a gentleman; whereupon the sardonic French philosopher apologised for his call. William Wycherley was thirty years older than Congreve. He was brought up in Paris, and his first play, *Love in a Wood*, was produced in 1672. His fame as a dramatist mainly rests on his two comedies, *The Country Wife* and *A Plain Dealer*, both coarse enough to justify Macaulay's nausea, but both excellent in their characterisation and their humour.

Other dramatists of the period of less importance are John Vanbrugh, the architect of Blenheim Palace, George Ethridge, Otway, and Lee, who collaborated with Dryden in imitations of Corneille. Dryden himself is a Restoration dramatist, but he was far more than a dramatist, as we have seen.

## READING LIST

*The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, edited by H. B. Wheatley, 8 vols., in Bohn's Library (Bell). Messrs. Dent publish the *Diary* in two vols. in the Everyman's Library.

Percy Lubbock's *Pepys* in the Literary Lives Series (Hodder & Stoughton).

*Hudibras*, edited by A. R. Waller (Cambridge University Press).

Professor Saintsbury's *Dryden* in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

Dryden's *Poetical Works* (Oxford University Press).

Dryden's *Dramatic Essays* in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

Dryden and Swift are the two greatest English satirists, and their achievement is acutely assessed by Hugh Walker in *English Satire and Satirists* (Dent).

In Everyman's Library is a volume of Restoration Plays edited by Edmund Gosse.

The following volumes in the Mermaid Series of the Old Dramatists



(Benn): Dryden (2 vols.), Otway, Farquhar, Vanbrugh, Congreve, Wycherley.

Restoration drama as a whole is treated in Bonamy Dobrée's provocatively readable and unobtrusively scholarly books: *Restoration Comedy* and *Restoration Tragedy* (Oxford University Press). And in Allardyce Nicoll, *British Dramatists from Dryden to Sheridan* (Harrap).

The literature of the period as a whole is adequately surveyed, in brief compass, by Richard Garnett, *The Age of Dryden* (Bell).

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## XVI

### FRENCH LITERATURE IN THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV

#### § 1

PASCAL, one of the few French writers of genius of the first half of the seventeenth century, was a very definite Puritan. He was born in 1623, and was a mathematician as well as a theologian and a great writer. In his *Lettres Provinciales* and his *Pensées*, Pascal deals with the great problems of life, the miserable insufficiency of all that is human and the consuming glory of God. No Anglo-Saxon writer ever emphasised more fiercely the pitiful impotence of man as compared with the infinite, no religious fanatic ever more vehemently admonished humiliation, no philosopher was ever more awestruck by the greatness of the universe in which man is so small a thing. Looking to the heavens Pascal exclaimed: "The eternal silence of those infinite spaces fills me with fear."

Many of his "Thoughts," brief, striking, and profound, are as familiar as household words in almost every land. Here are a few typical examples:

"Man is but a reed, the weakest thing in nature, but he is a thinking reed."

"The heart has reasons of its own, of which Reason never dreams."

"If the nose of Cleopatra had been shorter the whole history of the earth would have been changed."

The idea of ensuring the correctness of the French language, of establishing a recognised standard of literary taste, and of creating a literary authority, owed much to Cardinal Richelieu, who set up the French Academy in 1629. The Cardinal desired order and authority in literature as in everything else. While the French Academy has given literature a place in national life that it has never had in England, it has always made a conservative resistance to every new literary development, and some of the greatest of French writers, including Molière and Flaubert, have never been elected to a seat among the "Immortals." One of the earliest acts of the Academy was to belittle the first work of genius to be produced in France in the seventeenth century—Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid*.

Pierre Corneille was born at Rouen in 1606, and his first play was produced in 1636. Corneille lived until 1684, and his later plays belong to the era of Louis XIV. He stands in literary history as the forerunner



of the great century of French literature rather than as one of its actual figures. Corneille was by nature a romantic ; he loved words as much as Rabelais loved them. He was as fond of rhetoric as Marlowe, and of tempestuous melodrama as Webster or any other of the Elizabethans.

Corneille was a very unequal writer. Molière once said : " My friend Corneille has a familiar spirit that inspires him to write the finest verses in the world. Sometimes the familiar spirit leaves him to look after himself, and then he writes very badly." His genius was justly recognised in his own time ; but many later critics, including Voltaire, rated him as a writer of small importance : he is not that, but he is inferior to Racine, with whom he has been contrasted *ad nauseam*. Although turgid and ultra-heroic, he yet had nobility and power.

The great French philosopher, René Descartes, published his *Discours de la Méthode* within a few months of the appearance of *Le Cid*. It is outside the scope of this OUTLINE to attempt any summary of the mathematical and metaphysical speculations with which the fame of Descartes is associated, but he has a considerable place in the history of French literature as a master of a clear and simple style. He was born in 1596 and died in Stockholm in 1650. His first book, a treatise on fencing, was written when he was sixteen, and from then to the end of his life he was an industrious and voluminous writer.

## § 2

### MOLIÈRE

Molière was the stage name of Jean Baptiste Poquelin, who was born in Paris in 1622, his father being a court upholsterer. Molière was educated by the Jesuits, translated Lucretius, read Aristotle, and was sufficiently educated to defend Descartes. Like many another young man, Molière might have been a successful upholsterer and have succeeded his father as a court tradesman. But he preferred to be an actor. When he was twenty he organised a company of players, hired a Paris tennis-court, and fitted it up with a stage for dramatic performances. The time, however, was ill-fitted for theatrical success. Paris was in a constant state of political ferment ; the streets were none too safe, and the citizens were in no mood for the play. Molière and his comrades acted in various tennis-courts, but everywhere with the same lack of success. In 1645, indeed, he was imprisoned for a time for not paying for the candles used in the theatre.

After four years' persistent failure in Paris, Molière determined to seek his fortune in the provinces ; and for the next ten years he lived the life of a strolling player, in those days one of hardship and adventure—very



much, indeed, the same as the life led by nineteenth-century English showmen as described by Dickens in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. When the temporary stage had been erected in a tennis-court or barn, it was hung round with tapestries, and the actors made their entrances and exits by struggling through heavy curtains. The hall was generally lighted by a chandelier holding four candles, and suspended from the ceiling; and it was customary every now and again to let down the chandelier with a rope and pulley that some kindly soul in the audience might snuff the candles with his fingers.

Molière was a tall, amiable, kind-hearted man, generous, honest, and good-humoured. "His nose was thick, his mouth large with thick lips, his complexion brown, his eyebrows black and strongly marked, and it was his way of moving them that gave him his comic expression on the stage." All his contemporaries agreed in regarding him as a great comic actor as well as a dramatist of genius. Molière's masterpieces are *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *Tartuffe*, *Le Misanthrope*, and *Le Malade Imaginaire*, all of which hold the stage to-day as securely as the comedies and tragedies of Shakespeare himself.

What are the qualities of a writer to whom critical opinion gives so high a praise? His great achievement was the creation of French comedy. He was a realist interested in the life of the people of his own time. He was as impressed as Chaucer and as Shakespeare with the humour and the drama of ordinary everyday life. Thus, in the *Précieuses Ridicules* he laughs at a set of women with literary affectations, a pose of France in 1650 as it has been a pose in England and America in later times; in *Tartuffe* he laughs rather bitterly at hypocrisy, and in the *Malade Imaginaire* he gibes at doctors. In the *Misanthrope*, perhaps the greatest of all his plays, he has, in the character of the hero, Alceste, chosen himself for a hero—a sensitive, lonely, disillusioned man, standing in a little dark lonely corner, pitted against a cold, superficial, unsympathetic world.

The incidents in Molière's plays are few and are carefully chosen, and he is concerned all the time with the development of character. Every incident and every situation, which would not serve to make his characters clearer to the audience, is rejected. Nor is he concerned with more than the outstanding characteristics of each person he puts on the stage. He paints in broad outline, and not in infinite detail. For example, *Tartuffe* is a hypocrite, who loves women and loves power. That is all that Molière tells us about him; that is all we need to know about him for the purpose of his play.

Like all great humorists, Molière is tolerant. He is never angry, even with his villains, for they too are human, and are as they are. He does not defend them or apologise for them, but he describes with accuracy



and without passion, recognising that all human beings have a certain dignity whatever their shortcomings.

Perhaps the best-known of Molière's comedies is the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Molière himself was the original Jourdain, a part associated with the fame of the great modern French actor, Coquelin. Jourdain is a rich shopkeeper with an itch to get into society. In order that he may acquire a proper manner and an appropriate vocabulary, he engages a music master, a dancing master, a fencing master, and a teacher of philosophy, from the latter of whom he learns that "there is nothing by which we can express ourselves except prose or verse." Jourdain is astounded. "'Pon my word," he says, "I have been speaking prose these forty years without being aware of it."

The music master, the dancing master, and the fencing master quarrel, and these professors, together with Jourdain's new tailor, make him a ridiculous figure of fun. But though Madame Jourdain may laugh at him, his aristocratic friend, Comte Dorante, approves of his escapades—and borrows his money. So completely turned is Jourdain's head that he refuses to allow his daughter to marry a young man of his own class until the suitor dresses up in oriental garments and professes that he is the son of the Grand Turk. The *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* is a farce with the thinnest of plots, but its stagecraft is deft, its characterisation admirably humorous, and its dialogue delightfully witty.

Molière's career is more remarkable when it is remembered that all through his life he was not only a busy actor-manager, but that he was also continually exposed to the intrigues of his enemies—jealous rivals, and indignant churchmen, who, for reasons which are hard for us to understand, persistently denounced him as the enemy of God. The enmity of the Church continued even after his death. An eye-witness of Molière's funeral says :

There was no procession, except three ecclesiastics ; four priests bore the body in a wooden bier covered with a pall, six children in blue carried candles in silver holders, and there were lackeys with burning torches of wax. The body . . . was taken to St. Joseph's churchyard, and buried at the foot of the cross. There was a great crowd, and some twelve hundred livres were distributed among the poor. The archbishop had given orders that Molière should be interred without any ceremony, and had even forbidden the clergy of the diocese to do any service for him.

From the first time that he acted before him to his death, Louis XIV extended constant favours and patronage to Molière, and even when the days of the king's worldliness had come to an end, and, under the influence of Madame de Maintenon, Versailles had acquired the air of a conventicle, the great dramatist retained the royal favour. But even this had its



drawbacks, because it meant an enormous expenditure of time in writing masques and arranging entertainments.

As a writer Molière's influence may be to some extent estimated by the manner in which he has affected the language of his country. Every-day English speech is interlarded with quotations from Shakespeare, Milton, and Dickens, and no writer has given as many sentences and phrases to colloquial French as Molière. At least one of them, "Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?" has almost become English.

Lytton Strachey says: "In the literature of France Molière occupies the same kind of position as Cervantes in that of Spain, Dante in that of Italy, and Shakespeare in that of England." And Andrew Lang declared: "In the literature of France his is the greatest name, and in the literature of modern drama the greatest after that of Shakespeare."

## § 3

## JEAN RACINE

Racine has always appeared to English readers a dull writer, but in France not only are his plays still acted but he is regarded by most Frenchmen as the supreme French writer. This is due, apart from the sheer beauty of his verse, to the complete and unrivalled success with which he achieved the French ideal of compression of incident, unity of time, and the avoidance of everything that was irrelevant to the theme of his play.

Jean Racine was born in 1639. His family were Jansenists—the French Puritans—and he was educated at the famous convent of Port-Royal. His early devotion to literature was naturally resented by his devout relations. In one of his letters he complains that a sonnet he wrote on Mazarin had brought him excommunication on excommunication. His first play, *La Thébaïde*, was produced by Molière's company in 1664, and it is possible that Molière himself acted in it. Molière also produced Racine's second play, *Alexandre le Grand*. A fortnight afterwards the dramatist took his play to a rival company, apparently having quarrelled with Molière. For ten years Racine continued writing play after play. His masterpieces are: *Andromaque*, *Phèdre*, and *Athalie*.

In 1673 he was elected to the French Academy. *Phèdre* was produced in 1677, and although Racine lived for another twenty years, in this play his writing practically came to an end. He repented of the loose life he had led, married, and settled down to a quiet, domestic life, living on a pension granted to him by Louis XIV. He died on April 12, 1699.

*Phèdre* is the best known of Racine's plays. Every French actress of



talent still desires to appear at least once as *Phèdre*, just as every English actor of talent persists in playing Hamlet. It is a tragedy founded on the Greek, with many variations; a tremendous drama of horror, mystery, and jealousy, conveying something of the Greek dogma that man is helpless in the hands of Fate. His earlier play, *Andromaque*, illustrates Racine's power to contrive dramatic effects with the smallest number of characters and incidents. There are only four characters in the play—two men and two women. Lytton Strachey has very deftly summarised the story:

*Andromaque*, the still youthful widow of Hector, cares for only two things in the world with passionate devotion—her young son Astyanax and the memory of her husband. Both are the captives of Pyrrhus, the conqueror of Troy, a straightforward, chivalrous, but somewhat barbarous prince, who, though he is affianced to Hermione, is desperately in love with *Andromaque*. Hermione is a splendid tigress, consumed by her desire for Pyrrhus; and Oreste is a melancholy, almost morbid man, whose passion for Hermione is the dominating principle of his life. These are the ingredients of the tragedy, ready to explode like gunpowder with the slightest spark. The spark is lighted when Pyrrhus declares to *Andromaque* that if she will not marry him he will execute her son.

*Andromaque* consents, but decides secretly to kill herself immediately after the marriage, and thus ensure both the safety of Astyanax and the honour of Hector's wife. Hermione, in a fury of jealousy, declares that she will fly with Oreste, on one condition—that he kills Pyrrhus. Oreste, putting aside all considerations of honour and friendship, consents; he kills Pyrrhus, and then returns to his mistress to claim his reward.

There follows one of the most violent scenes that Racine ever wrote—in which Hermione, in an anger of remorse and horror, turns upon her wretched lover and denounces his crime. Forgetful of her own instigation, she demands who it was that suggested to him the horrible deed "*Qui te l'a dit?*" she shrieks: one of those astounding phrases which, once heard, can never be forgotten. She rushes out to commit suicide, and the play ends with Oreste upon the stage.

In character Racine was the antithesis of Molière. He was jealous, arrogant, and irritable, with a bitter tongue, and the unfortunate habit of preferring a biting epigram to a friend. Thanks to the intrigue of one of the ladies at court, *Phèdre* was a comparative failure, and this was the reason why Racine abandoned play-writing at the height of his power. He lacked the humour necessary to accept criticism with amusement.

## § 4

## JEAN DE LA FONTAINE AND CHARLES PERRAULT

Jean de la Fontaine was born in 1621 at Château Thierry in Champagne. His father was a well-to-do deputy ranger, and Jean was his eldest child.

He was educated at the college of his native town, and thought of taking Holy Orders ; but before it was too late, found that he had mistaken his vocation. He then studied Law, until, in 1647, his father resigned his rangership in his son's favour, and arranged also a profitable marriage for him, with a young girl of sixteen, who brought him a dowry of 20,000 livres. Spiritually the marriage was not a success. We gather that Madame de la Fontaine read too many novels and neglected her housework, and after ten years they were separated.

La Fontaine was over thirty years of age before he began to write, and then he did not at once discover himself as a fabulist, but after the fashion of the period, wrote epigrams and ballads, and sought for patrons to whom he could flatteringly dedicate his poems, receiving in return worldly protection and financial benefits.

The fables of La Fontaine are, first of all, striking for their easy grace. He was poet and philosopher, as well as fabulist. La Fontaine's animals are never real animals. Unlike Fabre, he has no secrets to tell of the inner life of the dumb creation. But he has a genius for describing the essential exteriors of each animal, and, as has been well said, La Fontaine's animals are real animals with human minds.

Something of the charm of La Fontaine's writing may be gathered from the following translation of one of the fables :

### THE JAY IN THE FEATHERS OF THE PEACOCK

A peacock moulted : soon a jay was seen  
 Bedeck'd with Argus tail of gold and green.  
 High strutting, with elated crest,  
 As much a peacock as the rest.  
     His trick was recognised and bruited,  
     His person jeer'd at, hiss'd, and hooted.  
     The peacock gentry flocked together,  
     And pluck'd the fool of every feather.  
 Nay more, when back he sneak'd to join his race,  
 They shut their portals in his face.

    There is another sort of jay,  
     The number of its legs the same,  
 Which makes of borrowed plumes display,  
     And plagiarism is its name.  
 But hush ! the tribe I'll not offend ;  
 'Tis not my work their ways to mend.



## § 5

If La Fontaine developed the bald fable into a little human story, instead of merely an anecdote of beasts, his contemporary Charles Perrault gave it yet another lift into popularity by his introduction of the fairy element. Perrault realised that there are some human wishes so far beyond realisation that only magic can bring them about.

It has been said that there are only half a dozen plots in the whole realm of fiction ; at least one of them is the story of the ragged girl who sits in the chimney-corner, and wishes she could go to the ball and dance with the prince. And it was Perrault who first created Cinderella. These are the titles of his familiar stories, which are legendary folk-tales, collected by him and retold in his own vivid and charming style : *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* (*Little Red Riding-hood*) ; *La Belle au Bois Dormant* (*The Sleeping Beauty*) ; *La Barbe-Bleue* (*Bluebeard*) ; *Le Maître Chat, ou Le Chat Botté* (*Puss in Boots*) ; *Les Fées* (*The Fairies*) ; *Cendrillon, ou La Petite Pantoufle de Vair* (*Cinderella*) ; *Riquet à la Houppe* (*Riquet of the Tuft*) ; *Le Petit Poucet* (*Hop-o'-my-Thumb*) ; and *La Belle et la Bête* (*Beauty and the Beast*).

These, as everybody knows, have become *the* fairy-tales of the world. It is difficult to realise that they were definitely the leisure products of a seventeenth-century French nobleman, who rated them far below his more ponderous publications, which have long ago been forgotten.

## § 6

The later writers of the Louis XIV era included Boileau, who did much to create a French classic tradition ; Madame de Sévigné, author of a series of letters that reveal the age of Louis XIV, something in the same way as such a book as Evelyn's *Diary* reveals the time of Charles II ; and La Bruyère, moralist and pessimist, who anticipated the social criticism of the eighteenth century and who has left us an ironic picture of the celebration of Mass at Versailles, in which the courtiers turned their faces to the king and their backs to God.

La Rochefoucauld, author of the famous book of *Maximes*, was an aristocrat. In this respect he differed from every other distinguished writer of the age of Louis XIV. Cold, disillusioned, as worldly in his philosophy as Chesterfield, the following extracts from the *Maximes* are characteristic of the man, and characteristic of the age, the splendour, and glory, which were the preparation of the horrors of the Revolution.

The simplest man with passion is more persuasive than the most eloquent without it.

We have all of us sufficient fortitude to bear the misfortunes of others.

Philosophy triumphs easily over past and over future evils, but present evils triumph easily over philosophy.

Old men are fond of giving good advice, to console themselves for being no longer in a position to give bad examples.

Hypocrisy is the homage which vice renders to virtue.

Gratitude is like the good faith of traders, it maintains commerce ; and we often pay, not because it is just to discharge our debts, but that we may more readily find people to trust.

We should often be ashamed of our best actions, if the world were witness to the motives which produce them.

None but the contemptible are apprehensive of contempt.

We are often more agreeable through our faults than through our good qualities.

Fortune breaks us of many faults which reason cannot.

None are either so happy or so unhappy as they imagine.

The head is always the dupe of the heart.

## READING LIST

Professor Saintsbury's *Short History of French Literature* (Oxford University Press) ; Lytton Strachey's book in the Home University Library.

For those who read French, much the best book on the whole course of French literature is Gustave Lanson's *Histoire de la Littérature Française* ; the historical background is attractively presented by F. Funck-Brentano in *The Old Regime in France* (Arnold).

Molière's *Dramatic Works*, translated by C. H. Wall, 3 vols. (Bell).

Racine's *Dramatic Works*, a Metrical English Version by R. Bruce Boswell, 2 vols. (Bell). John Masefield has written two notable "adapted" translations : *Berenice* and *Esther* (Heinemann.)

La Fontaine's *Fables*, translated by E. Wright, in Bohn's Library (Bell) ; and by Sir Edward Marsh (Heinemann).

Fénelon's *Spiritual Letters to Men* and *Spiritual Letters to Women* (both Longmans).

La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes*, translated by F. S. Stevens, is to be found in the World's Classics.

Descartes, by S. V. Keeling (Oxford University Press).

Pascal's *Thoughts*, translated and edited by C. S. Kaufman (Cambridge University Press).



## XVII

## POPE, ADDISON, STEELE, SWIFT

## § I

## ALEXANDER POPE

ALEXANDER POPE, born in 1688, was the greatest poet of his age and one of the greatest versifiers of all ages. "Hard as thy heart, and as thy birth obscure," wrote one of his innumerable enemies, but there seems no reason to doubt that his father was a well-to-do linen-draper. His character was as malformed as his puny body, and when contemplating his detestable pettiness, it is well to act on the charitable advice of Mr. Augustine Birrell and "remember that, during his whole maturity, he could neither dress nor undress himself, go to bed or get up without help, and that on rising he had to be invested with a stiff canvas bodice and tightly laced, and have put on him a fur doublet and numerous stockings to keep off the cold and fill out his shrunken form." His life was a long disease; his lifelong bitterness must be charitably excused. It was a "noble rage" for learning, an insatiable curiosity for exploring human nature which wrecked a feeble health that eighteenth-century medicine could hardly have improved. He was extraordinarily sensitive; he loathed every kind of sport in which some living creature was pursued. His wit was his only weapon and he used it ruthlessly—often treacherously, and never with the bluff, open straightforwardness which causes some of Dryden's strokes to sound like a slap. His mind was a clearing-house for all the scandalous gossip, and he was a specialist in the ignoble art of quarrelling. He had no chivalry in his crippled soul—he satirised Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, to whom he made violent love, in the most brutal lines ever written by man against woman. He hated his literary rivals, great or small; he included Bentley and Defoe among the dunce of his "Dunciad," which too often rises to a shriek, a shrill feminism, to be equal to the virile satires of Dryden. And, as a punishment, the sarcasm of the merest scribbler caused him to writhe in anguish. Indeed, the venomous poet's character and curses tax our charity at times beyond its power.

Pope had a double power. He could crystallise the plain man's thoughts into memorable verse and he could express thoughts of the subtlest ingenuity.

Next to Shakespeare, he is the most often quoted (and misquoted) of English poets. He is easily the most elegant versifier of his age, and there is no question of his right to be regarded as a true poet.

Pope, living his sheltered life and not having to struggle for a livelihood, soon made his mark. His "Pastorals" (published 1709) were actually preferred by one critic to Virgil's *Eclogues*! They prove his zeal for "correctness" and something of the genius for taking infinite pains. In 1711 he put forth his "Essay on Criticism," which, though unequal, is a wonderful achievement for a youth of twenty-one, for it was written in 1709. Here is a famous passage :

A little learning is a dangerous thing ;  
 Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring :  
 There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,  
 And drinking largely sobers us again.

The "Rape of the Lock," complete with its "machinery" of sylphs and gnomes, appeared in 1714, and was acclaimed as a masterpiece of wit. It is in form perfect of its kind, with the brilliancy of a piece of Dresden china and something, it may be, of its hardness. Here is the description of the lock of hair, the theft of which was the cause of such disaster :

This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,  
 Nourished two locks, which graceful hung behind,  
 In equal curls, and well conspired to deck  
 With shining ringlets the smooth ivory neck.  
 Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,  
 And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.  
 With hairy springes we the birds betray,  
 Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,  
 Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,  
 And beauty draws us with a single hair.

His next great work was his translation of Homer's poems, which have rapidity and nobleness, two at any rate of the qualities required of so daring an adventure. The "Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady" and "Eloisa to Abelard" are to be read as illustrations of his serious manner. If the latter falls short of the piercing passion of the immortal love-story, there is yet a deep understanding of the human heart in these lines :

Assist me, heav'n ! but whence arose that pray'r  
 Sprung it from piety or from despair ?  
 Ev'n here, where frozen chastity retires,  
 Love finds an altar for forbidden fires.  
 I ought to grieve, but cannot what I ought ;  
 I mourn the lover, not lament the fault ;



I view my crime, but kindle at the view,  
 Repent old pleasures, and solicit new ;  
 Now turn'd to heav'n, I weep my past offence,  
 Now think of thee, and curse my innocence.  
 Of all affliction taught a lover yet,  
 'Tis sure the hardest science to forget !

In "The Dunciad" (first complete edition, 1729)—written at his leisure despite Swift's warning: "Take care that the bad poets do not outwit you," and the fact that the dullards satirised were dying off one by one out of sheer stupid perversity—we have the most elaborate, if not the most effective, satire in the language. The freshness and unageing force of the satire reside in its universal appeal, for it attacks that inexpugnable power of stupidity, enthroned in every age, against which the gods themselves strive in vain. The best passage is the last of all, in which the extinction of all intelligence, all the arts and sciences, is fantastically foretold—a piece of very noble verse—

In vain, in vain—the all-composing hour  
 Resistless falls : the Muse obeys the power.  
 She comes ! she comes ! the sable throne behold  
 Of night primæval and of Chaos old !  
 Before her, fancy's gilded clouds decay,  
 And all its varying rainbows die away.  
 Wit shoots in vain its momentary fires.  
 The meteor drops, and in a flash expires.  
 As one by one, at dead Medea's strain,  
 The sick'ning stars fade off th' ethereal plain ;  
 As Argus' eyes by Hermes' wand opprest,  
 Clos'd one by one to everlasting rest ;  
 Thus at her felt approach, and secret might,  
 Art after art goes out, and all is night.  
 See skulking Truth to her old cavern fled,  
 Mountains of casuistry heap'd o'er her head !  
 Philosophy, that lean'd on Heav'n before,  
 Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.  
 Physic of metaphysic begs defence,  
 And metaphysic calls for aid on sense !  
 See mystery to mathematics fly !  
 In vain ! they gaze, turn giddy, rave, and die.  
 Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,  
 And unawares morality expires.  
 Nor public flame, nor private, dares to shine ;  
 Nor human spark is left, nor glimpse divine !  
 Lo ! thy dread empire, Chaos ! is restor'd ;  
 Light dies before thy uncreating word ;  
 Thy hand, great Anarch ! lets the curtain fall,  
 And universal darkness buries all.

But finer, perhaps, than anything in "The Dunciad" is the passage in the *Satires* which holds up to ridicule Lord Hervey under the name of "Sporus":

Let Sporus tremble—What? that thing of silk,  
Sporus, that mere white curd of ass's milk?  
Satire or sense, alas! can Sporus feel?  
Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?  
Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,  
This painted child of dirt, that stinks and stings;  
Amphibious thing! that acting either part,  
The trifling head or the corrupted heart,  
Fop at the toilet, flatterer at the board,  
Now trips a lady, and now struts a lord.  
Eve's tempter thus the Rabbins have exprest,  
A cherub's face, a reptile all the rest;  
Beauty that shocks you, parts that none will trust;  
Wit that can creep, and pride that licks the dust.

To-day, however, the "Essay on Man" is the most real of all Pope's poems. It gave him a European reputation, winning the warm admiration of Voltaire and others who had the ear of the civilised world. It is not, as Pope believed, a real contribution to philosophy. Modern criticism, in appraising its ethical value, steers a midway course between the extravagant compliment of Dugald Stewart, who called it "the noblest specimen of philosophical poetry which our language affords," and the extravagant condemnation of De Quincey, who dismissed it as "the realisation of anarchy." It contains constantly quoted lines such as:

An honest man's the noblest work of God,  
which set forth in the fewest and most emphatic words possible thoughts which are always in men's minds. The crowd-compelling power of such ever-popular poems consists in the fact that they say in memorable phrases, with a simple, striking imagery, what the average man thinks—or thinks he thinks—about the great problems of human life, here and in the hereafter. Everybody can appreciate the familiar image in the following lines:

God loves from Whole to Parts: but human soul  
Must rise from Individual to the Whole.  
Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,  
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;  
The centre mov'd, a circle straight succeeds,  
Another still, and still another spreads;  
Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace;  
His country next; and next all human race;  
Wide and more wide, th' o'erflowings of the mind  
Take ev'ry creature in, of ev'ry kind;  
Earth smiles around, with boundless bounty blest,  
And Heav'n beholds its image in his breast.



None the less it is a part of the poet's many-sided art thus to refurbish a truism into a truth, and out of a platitude create a proverbial saying. Pope's "Moral Essays" are full of the lines that have attained almost the currency of proverbs. They teach us to search "the ruling passion," and to admire the proofs of potency even in the hour of death, as in such humorous instances as Narcissa's :

"Odious ! in woollen ! 'twould a saint provoke "  
 (Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke).  
 "No, let a charming chintz, and Brussels lace  
 Wrap my cold limbs and shade my lifeless face :  
 One would not, sure, be frightful when one's dead—  
 And—Betty—give this cheek a little red."

Sometimes Pope's faculty of proverb-making takes a loftier flight, as in the famous epitaph intended for Sir Isaac Newton :

Nature and Nature's Laws lay hid in night :  
 God said, "*Let Newton be !*" And all was light.

But it is Pope's strength, and his weakness also, that he expressed the mind of the average man who judges his fellow-creatures from a practical standpoint, by their words and works, and not by their intentions, and those rare and thrilling intimations of better, braver things which are the stuff of the greatest poetry.

John Gay, the author of *The Beggar's Opera*, was the best beloved of Pope's circle of friends. Pope described him :

Of manners gentle, of affection mild ;  
 In art a man, simplicity a child.

He wrote comedies and fables, but *The Beggar's Opera*—a foretaste of Gilbertian topsy-turvydom—made him famous, and when its sequel, *Polly*, was prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain, its publication made Gay comparatively well off. Gay was buried in Westminster Abbey, and his monument bears his own line :

Life is a jest and all things show it :  
 I thought so once and now I know it.

## § 2

### ADDISON AND STEELE

We come to the rise of the English Essay as we now understand this form of English literature. It may be noted that the early years of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries were all favourable to the

periodical essay in this country. In the first of these three periods Addison and Steele socialised the essay, so to speak ; they brought it into everyday life and made it familiar and delightful to the multitude. In the hands of imitators like Fielding, Johnson, Goldsmith, Shenstone, Bonnell Thornton, and others, the essay remained popular, though less distinguished, throughout the century of its rebirth. Early in the nineteenth century it became more definitely a means of intimate self-expression in the hands of Lamb, and Hazlitt, and De Quincey ; and its later prosperity as a literary form needs no indication. To-day its popularity seems steadily to increase. It is now a self-existing form of literary expression. But the essay of Addison and Steele was rather a new and elevated kind of journalism, designed to form and unite public opinion in an age when newspapers were few and had little or no moral influence.

The opportunity was there and these essayists took it. In the dawn of the eighteenth century English society lacked cohesion and tone. The events of the previous half-century had left many sullen divisions. Puritanism and the Established Church still watched each other in fear and suspicion. The court had been vitiated by Charles II, and immorality had become nothing less than a fashionable cult with a stock of ideas and shibboleths which are reflected in the artificialities and indecencies of the Restoration comedies. The party system, which was to give power and direction to Parliament and to purify statesmanship, was only in formation. London and the country were separated by physical and spiritual gulfs which we can hardly realise. It was into such a world that Steele and Addison brought their urbane wisdom, their reconciling wit, and their gospel of decency, kindness, and right reason.

Undoubtedly the inventive element in this new literature was Steele's. He it was who conceived the *Tatler*. His previous career may be briefly summarised. Born in Dublin in 1672, he had met Addison, a schoolfellow, at the Charterhouse. There were but two months between their ages. They met again at Oxford, but Steele left the university to go soldiering. As private, ensign, and captain, he learnt something of the prodigal habits which helped him to interpret human nature and its foibles in the *Tatler* with a touch sympathetic, yet half monitory. He wrote his first book, *The Christian Hero*, while he was still an ensign, in order to correct his "propensity to unwarrantable pleasures." That was in 1701 ; but his friends in the army, and the men about town, and in the end he himself, were not impressed by his moral and religious ideas in the book, and he went on to write plays.

His fourth play, *The Conscious Lovers*, fairly took the town, and Harley, the Whig Minister, bestowed on him the post of Gazetteer and Gentleman Usher at Court.



Meanwhile Addison's training had been more cosmopolitan, more that of a travelled scholar and a man of culture, than Steele's. After ten years at Magdalen College, Oxford, where his portrait still hangs in the hall, while his favourite walk is pointed out on the banks of Cherwell, he decided against taking Orders, and his literary experience began, like Montaigne's, with the writing of Latin verse.

His first English verse soon followed, and he used it adroitly to gain the ear of Dryden, who asked him for a critical preface to the *Georgics* of Virgil—a high honour from a past master. Dryden spoke of him as "the most ingenious W. Addison of Oxford"; and with that recognition his future seemed assured. But politics counted for much in Addison's life, as well as in Steele's: Addison was a good Whig, and his Whig friends got for him a travelling pension of £300 a year, to enable him to go abroad, learn French and Italian, and qualify for a diplomatic career. This led to his travels in France and Italy, his meeting with Boileau, his return via Germany and Holland to England in 1702. "The letter from Italy to Halifax," in rhymed couplets, and his poem "The Campaign," in the same measure, read to us now like fine literary exercises, compared with the prose of his essays. But "The Campaign" was the making of Addison. Godolphin, the Whig premier, had strong political reasons for making the most of Marlborough's great victory at Blenheim in August, 1704. He sought out Addison, who was then, it is said, living obscurely in a garret at the top of three flights of stairs in the Haymarket. The poem is no longer read, but its famous simile of Marlborough and the angel will always be quoted:

So when an angel at divine command,  
With rising tempests shakes a guilty land  
(Such as of late o'er pale Britannia passed),  
Calm and serene he drives the furious blast;  
And, pleased the Almighty's orders to perform,  
Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.

The poem fulfilled all Godolphin's wishes, and Addison was rewarded with an Under-Secretaryship of State, the first of a number of offices of profit which he honourably if not too competently filled. He had no hand in the design or first publication of the *Tatler*, and, indeed, was in Ireland at the time as secretary to the Earl of Wharton, Lord Lieutenant, but he soon recognised Steele's hand, and his proffered help as a contributor was wisely and warmly accepted.

The *Tatler* appeared on April 12, 1709. Wishing to be anonymous, Steele adopted the name of Isaac Bickerstaff, borrowed from Swift, who had taken it from a shop-door in Long Acre and used it as a cloak under

which to attack John Partridge, a notorious advertising astrologer and almanac-maker. Although the *Tatler* underwent considerable change after Addison began to write for it, Steele launched it in the right way. He linked it to the coffee-houses, of which there were no fewer than three thousand in London. They were the centres of news, gossip, and discussion. He announced in his first number :

All accounts of gallantry, pleasures, and entertainment shall be under article of White's Coffee-house ; poetry under that of Will's Coffee-house ; learning under the title of the Grecian ; foreign and domestic news you will have from St. James's Coffee-house ; and what else I have to offer on any other subject shall be dated from my own apartment.

White's Coffee-house, the parent of White's Club, and the St. James's Coffee-house were in St. James's Street ; Will's, where Dryden, in his winter chair by the fire or his summer seat on the balcony, had dictated the laws of criticism and taste in poetry to his worshippers, was in Russell Street ; and the Grecian, the oldest of all the coffee-houses, was in Devereux Court, Essex Street. In these places Steele collected news and topics ; in places the *Tatler* was itself discussed. Its success was immediate. Steele made an appeal at the outset to women by declaring that his title was chosen in their honour. The paper appeared three times a week on the post days, which were Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. The first four numbers were given away gratis, and then the price of one penny was charged. The motto adopted was Juvenal's " Quicquid agunt homines," etc., freely translated :

Whate'er men do, or say, or think, or dream,  
Our motley paper seizes for its theme.

Some of Addison's most delightful essays appear in the *Tatler*, but Steele stamped its character on the work as a censor of manners and morals, a corrector of the public taste, and exponent of everyday London topics. His aim was, as he said, " to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behaviour."

All these elements in the *Tatler* combined to prepare the way for the more finished but not more vivid art of the *Spectator*, with Sir Roger de Coverley, like a full-length portrait by Gainsborough, for the master of those humours and ceremonies.

Isaac Bickerstaff had unluckily meddled in politics in the earlier career of the *Tatler*, as we know by Swift and his " Letters to Stella " ; and Steele lost his post as Gazetteer owing to that fact. This, too, helped to bring the



journal to its rather sudden end ; and it was probably on Addison's more prudent counsel that it was decided to begin a new organ entirely without politics.

On January 2, 1711, appeared the last *Tatler*. At the beginning of March following appeared the first of the *Spectator*.

The *Spectator* was at first a penny paper, issued daily ; but in 1712, when the stamp duty killed off several papers, the price was raised to two-pence. Steele and Addison's collaborative journal ran to 555 numbers ; the later numbers to 635, were an attempt to revive it without Steele, and an unsuccessful one. Addison's picturesque statement of his aims is worth quoting. In an early number he wrote : " It was said of Socrates that he brought philosophy down from heaven to inhabit among men ; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me that I have brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools, colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses."

" It is not strange," says Macaulay, " that the success of the *Spectator* should have been such as no similar work has ever obtained. The number of copies daily distributed was at first three thousand. It subsequently increased, and had risen to near four thousand when the stamp tax was imposed. The *Spectator*, however, stood its ground, and though its circulation fell off, still yielded a large revenue both to the State and to the authors. For particular papers, the demand was immense ; of some, it is said, twenty thousand copies were required. But this was not all. To have the *Spectator* served up every morning with the bohea and the rolls was a luxury for the few. The majority were content to wait till essays enough had appeared to form a volume. Ten thousand copies of each volume were immediately taken off, and new editions were called for. It must be remembered that the population of England was then hardly a third of what it now is " (in 1845). " There was doubtless more than one knight of the shire whose country seat did not contain ten books, receipt books and books on farriery included. In these circumstances, the sale of the *Spectator* must be considered as indicating a popularity quite as great as that of the most successful works of Sir Walter Scott and Mr. Dickens of our time."

By their genius, Steele and Addison made of the essay a perfectly responsive form of literature, in direct touch with life. In the " Sir Roger de Coverley " series they worked their richest vein of the human comedy ; it is one of the charms of the essay, as they wrote it, that it is able to touch so many of the other literary forms without losing its own individual quality. And for their style, which is carried to a degree of colloquial perfection, it may be described as " a talking mode " of writing, almost as easy in apparent effect as speech itself.

To illustrate the two essayists' separate and joint faculty let us take an instance of the " Isaac Bickerstaff " papers in the *Tatler*, which deals with London coffee-house " talkers and story-tellers " and then a Sir Roger



de Coverley essay. The *Tatler* essay is No. 264, dated as Bickerstaff's custom was "from my own Apartment, December 15" (1710):

It was said of two ancient authors, who had very different beauties in their style, "that if you took a word from one of them, you only spoiled his eloquence; but if you took a word from the other, you spoiled his sense." I have often applied the first part of this criticism to several of these coffee-house speakers whom I have at present in my thoughts, though the character that is given to the last of those authors is what I would recommend to the imitation of my loving countrymen. But it is not only public places of resort, but private clubs and conversations over a bottle, that are infested with this loquacious kind of animal, especially that species which I comprehend under the name of story-teller. I would earnestly desire these gentlemen to consider, that no point of wit or mirth at the end of a story can atone for the half hour that has been lost before they come at it. I would likewise lay it home to their serious consideration, whether they think that every man in the company has not a right to speak as well as themselves? and whether they do not think they are invading another man's property, when they engross the time which should be divided equally among the company to their own private use?

This goes to illustrate the talking habit in the London coffee-houses, which is so nearly related to the colloquial art of the periodical essay.

As for Sir Roger de Coverley, he was a joint creation. Steele first struck out the portrait in an admirable pastiche; Addison went on and elaborated the knight's adventures and London humours. The whole is an inimitable personal study; a comedy in narrative, a story in essay form, which is a classic in the world-literature. This is Steele's first sketch in his account of the *Spectator* Club:

The first of our Society is a Gentleman from *Worcestershire*, of ancient Descent, a Baronet, His Name Sir Roger de Coverley. His great Grandfather was Inventor of that famous Country-Dance which is call'd after him. All who know that Shire are very well acquainted with the Parts and Merits of Sir Roger. He is a Gentleman that is very singular in his Behaviour, but his Singularities proceed from his good sense, and are Contradictions to the Manners of the World, only as he thinks the World is in the wrong. However, this Humour creates him no Enemies, for he does nothing with Sourness or Obstinacy; and his being unconfined to Modes and Forms, makes him but the readier and the more capable to please and oblige all who know him. When he is in town he lives in *Soho-Square*: it is said he keeps himself a Batchelor by reason he was crossed in Love, by a perverse beautiful Widow of the next County to him.

Before this disappointment Sir Roger was what you call a fine Gentleman, had often supped with my Lord *Rochester* and Sir *George Etherege*, fought a Duel upon his first coming to Town, and Kick'd Bully *Dawson* in a publick Coffee-house for calling him Youngster. But being ill-used by the above-mentioned Widow, he was very serious for a Year and a half; and though, his temper being naturally jovial, he at last got over it, he grew careless of himself, and never dressed afterwards; he continues to wear a Coat and Doublet of the same Cut that were



in fashion at the Time of his Repulse, which, in his merry Humours, he tells us, has been in and out twelve times since he first wore it. He is now in his Fifty sixth Year, cheerful, gay and hearty, keeps a good House both in Town and Country ; a great Lover of Mankind ; but there is such a mirthful Cast in his behaviour, that he is rather beloved than esteemed : his Tenants grow rich, his Servants look satisfied, all the young Women profess Love to him, and the young Men are glad of his Company : when he comes into a House he calls the Servants by their Names, and talks all the way up Stairs to a Visit. I must not omit that Sir Roger is a Justice of the *Quorum* ; that he fills the chair at a Quarter-Session with great Abilities, and three Months ago gain'd universal Applause by explaining a Passage in the Game-Act.

The next is Addison's account of Sir Roger's visit to the Abbey, with a vivid London prelude, which together make what is perhaps the most famous single essay in English literature :

As we went up the body of the church, the knight pointed at the trophies upon one of the monuments, and cried out : " A brave man, I warrant him ! " Passing afterwards by Sir Cloudesley Shovel, he flung his head that way and cried : " Sir Cloudesley Shovel ! A very gallant man ! " As we stood before Busby's tomb, the knight uttered himself again after the same manner : " Dr. Busby ! a great man ! he whipped my grandfather ; a very great man ! I should have gone to him myself, if I had not been a blockhead ; a very great man ! "

We were immediately conducted into the little chapel on the right hand. Sir Roger, planting himself at our historian's elbow, was very attentive to everything he said, particularly to the account he gave us of the lord who had cut off the king of Morocco's head. Among several other figures he was very well pleased to see the statesman Cecil upon his knees ; and concluding them all to be great men, was conducted to the figure which represents that martyr to good housewifery who died by the prick of a needle. Upon our interpreter's telling us that she was a maid of honour to Queen Elizabeth, the knight was very inquisitive into the name and family ; and after having regarded her finger for some time, " I wonder," says he, " that Sir Richard Baker has said nothing of her in his Chronicle."

We were then conveyed to the two coronation chairs, where my old friend, after having heard that the stone underneath, the most ancient of them, which was brought from Scotland, was called Jacob's pillar, sat himself down in the chair ; and looking like the figure of an old Gothic king, asked our interpreter, what authority they had to say that Jacob had ever been in Scotland. The fellow, instead of returning him an answer, told him " that he hoped his honour would pay his forfeit." I could observe Sir Roger a little ruffled upon being thus trepanned ; but our guide not insisting upon his demand, the knight soon recovered his good-humour, and whispered in my ear " if Will Wimble were with us, and saw those two chairs, it would go hard but he would get a tobacco-stopper out of one or t'other of them."

Sir Roger, in the next place, laid his hand upon Edward III's sword, and leaning upon the pommel of it, gave us the whole history of the Black Prince ;



concluding, that in Richard Baker's opinion, Edward III was one of the greatest princes that ever sat upon the English throne.

We were then shewn Edward the Confessor's tomb ; upon which Sir Roger acquainted us, that " he was the first man who touched for the evil " ; and afterwards Henry IV's ; upon which he shook his head, and told us " there was fine reading in the casualties of that reign."

Our conductor then pointed to that monument where there is a figure of one of our English kings without a head ; and upon giving us to know that the head, which was of beaten silver, had been stolen away several years since ; " Some Whig, I'll warrant," says Sir Roger : " you ought to lock up your kings better ; they will carry off the body too, if you do not take care."

The glorious names of Henry V and Queen Elizabeth gave the knight great opportunities of shining, and of doing justice to Sir Richard Baker, " who," as our knight observed with some surprise, " had a great many kings in him whose monuments he had not seen in the abbey."

For my own part, I could not but be pleased to see the knight shew such an honest passion for the glory of his country, and such a respectful gratitude to the memory of its princes.

I must not omit, that the benevolence of my good old friend, which flows out towards every one he converses with, made him very kind to our interpreter, whom he looked upon as an extraordinary man ; for which reason he shook him by the hand at parting, telling him that he should be very glad to see him at his lodgings in Norfolk Buildings, and talk over these matters with him more at leisure.

Of the later years of Steele and Addison it is unnecessary to say much. The *Spectator* was followed by the *Guardian*, to which Steele was the principal contributor, Addison writing about fifty of its papers. Both essayists passed to a great extent from literature to politics, Addison again becoming Chief Secretary for Ireland and Steele entering Parliament. Unfortunately their friendship did not survive in these changes, and the painful rupture which occurred between them in 1718 was not healed. Addison, indeed, died in the following year, after three years of unhappiness with Sarah, Countess of Warwick, with whom he had made a showy but most unsuitable marriage. He died at Holland House, June 17, 1719, at the early age of forty-seven. He is said to have sent the message to the young Earl of Warwick, whose tutor he had been : " Come and see in what peace a Christian can die." His body was buried at midnight in Westminster Abbey. Few nobler tributes have been written than those in which his old friend Thomas Tickell described the scene of his burial in the Abbey :

Can I forget the dismal night that gave  
My soul's best part for ever to the grave ?  
How silent did his old companions tread,  
By midnight lamps, the mansions of the dead,  
Through breathing statues, then unheeded things,  
Through rows of warriors, and through walks of kings !



What awe did the slow solemn knell inspire ;  
 The pealing organ, and the passing choir ;  
 The duties by the lawn-robed prelate paid :  
 And the last words, that dust to dust conveyed !  
 While speechless o'er thy closing grave we bend,  
 Accept these tears, thou dear departed friend.  
 Oh, gone for ever ! take this long adieu ;  
 And sleep in peace next thy loved Montague.

Steele survived his old friend ten years—years saddened by the loss of his wife, his “ dear Prue,” to whom he wrote letters full of tender gallantry. He died far from London, at Carmarthen, September 1, 1729.

## § 3

## JONATHAN SWIFT

The name of Jonathan Swift is one of the very greatest names in English literature, and the *Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels* the greatest satires in the English language.

Swift, though called “ the great Irish patriot,” was Irish only in the sense of having been born in Dublin of English parents. He was educated at Kilkenny, the best school in Ireland, where he had Congreve for a school-fellow, and at Trinity College, Dublin, where he was “ stopped of his degree for dullness and insufficiency,” obtaining it finally as an act of special grace. He became the amanuensis of his mother's relative, the rich and urbane Sir William Temple, and resided for a term of years as a dependent at Moor Park, where he saw Esther Johnson (Stella) grow up from a delicate child of eight into “ one of the most beautiful, graceful, and agreeable young women in London—her hair was blacker than a raven, and every feature of her face in perfection.” At Temple's death he was already famous as a writer, having written *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books*. He was eventually recognised as the greatest of pamphleteers, and as a reward he obtained the Deanery of St. Patrick's in Dublin, a piece of preferment which he regarded as the stepping-stone to far better things. But with the death of Queen Anne the party he served was not so much ruined as annihilated ; and, retiring to Dublin, he threw in his lot with the Irish, the *Drapier's Letters* being the most splendid proofs of his wholehearted patriotism. We see him in his fighting prime as a tall powerful man with a large unemotional face, in which flashed eyes of a wondrous azure that could look lightning. He died “ from the top,” as he foretold, being harassed all his life by a labyrinthine vertigo, and falling into mental

decay he gradually lost his faculties. He left his fortune to found a lunatic asylum in Dublin :

And showed by one satiric touch  
No nation needed it so much.

He was not a comfortable companion, except to the high-placed personages whom he courted with an obsequiousness occasionally touched with insolence—for it was the place, not the man, he cultivated. At best, among his equals or inferiors, he was exacting, masterful ; at worst, he was a brutal bully. Faulkner, his Dublin publisher, years after the Dean's death was dining with some friends, who chaffed him for his odd way of eating asparagus. They laughed at him when he confessed that the Dean had told him it was the right way. Whereupon Faulkner, with a touch of choler, exclaimed : " I tell you what it is, gentlemen ; if you had ever dined with the Dean, you would have eaten your asparagus as he bade you." He had in him not a trace of courtesy which springs from the heart, and must be defined as formal kindness. He loved to humiliate those who, for this reason or that, were debarred from hitting back or were afraid to do so. Dining at a certain house, where the part of the tablecloth next to him happened to have a small hole in it, he tore the hole as wide as he could, and ate his soup through it ; his reason for such behaviour being, as he said, to mortify the lady of the house and teach her to pay a proper attention to housewifery.

A loathly man—yet lovable, and beloved by one of the most delightful women in all literary history—the Stella who moves Thackeray to a sudden rapture : " Fair and tender creature ! Pure and affectionate heart. . . . Gentle lady ! So lonely, so lovely, so unhappy . . . you are one of the saints of English story." Whether or not he married this lady will never be known ; probably he did not, as his ruthless rejection of Vanessa, who wished to compel a marriage, proves that he was not a marrying man. There is some mystery and misery in Swift's life which we shall never succeed in elucidating. This is why he reminds one of the most piteous and perplexing personalities in the history of English literature. His bodily sufferings which ended in five terrible years of madness had doubtless something to do with the character of his literary works.

His hatred of mankind seems sincere enough ; a burning indignation, more vehement than Juvenal's, consumes his vitals as he rages at the littlenesses, the treachery, and mean injustice of his fellow-animals. And, to add insult to injury, he thrusts at mankind's armour of hypocrisy and self-esteem. In the terrible pages of *Gulliver's Travels* he has packed all his venom, all his rage and woe. And what a strange vengeance posterity has taken on the most vindictive of satirists. His gospel of hatred has become



a book for the young and innocent, and has been eagerly read by generations of children. "After all it is a kind place, this planet," observes Mr. Birrell, commenting on this signal act of poetic justice; "the best use we have for our cynics is to let them amuse the junior portion of our population."

The problem of Swift's relations with Stella is one of the most fascinating in the history of literature. The portions of his letters to her, which impart news or views or both, are written in a delightful gossiping style. Sometimes he makes little rhymes that have the air of being proverbs, such as:

Be you lords or be you earls,  
You must write to naughty girls.

Swift's letters seem to show that love for a charming child had grown into the tender adoration of a beautiful, wise, and witty woman. This at least is certain—he loved her tenderly and truly, she was his one earthly joy. And the very fact that we can never understand the nature of their intimacy is on the whole a thing to be glad of—for it shows that Swift had the moon's mysteriousness in that he had one face for the world and another, not to be seen save by her, for the woman he loved.

It is not so easy to avoid condemnation of the man in examining his affair with Vanessa (Esther Vanhomrigh), who fell passionately in love with him. He tells the first part of the story himself in a charming poem entitled "Cadenus and Vanessa," which was not written for publication. This poem ends with the heroine's promise to teach her world-weary and elderly counsellor the art of love, and there is the shadow of a promise in the final couplet:

But what success Vanessa met  
Is to the world a secret yet.

In the end he had to choose between Stella and Vanessa, and his dismissal of the latter, though all the circumstances are not clear, strikes us as brutally abrupt.

He was a poet of power (despite Dryden's prophecy of failure), managing his octosyllabic line with the dexterity of a player at quarter-staff. But he is one of the very first masters of that English prose which is pithy rather than *pittoresque* and, based on a straightforward simplicity, lends at times to words and phrases the mass and momentum of things and actions. In style his prose is beyond criticism; in its matter it is the man in himself with all his odious faults, all the splendour of his genius, all his flashes of loving-kindness. George Saintsbury says: "If intellectual genius and literary art be taken together, no prose-writer, who is a prose-writer mainly, is Swift's superior, and a man might be hard put to it to say who among such writers in the plainer English can be pronounced his equal."

A brief discussion of his verse may fittingly begin with a quotation from his lines "On the Death of Dr. Swift," neatly defined by Edmund Gosse as a maxim of La Rochefoucauld expanded in five hundred lines, full of the bitter-sweet irony of the writer in his milder moods :

My female friends, whose tender hearts  
Have better learn'd to act their parts,  
Receive the news in doleful dumps :  
"The Dean is dead : (Pray what is trumps ?)  
Then, Lord have mercy on his soul !  
(Ladies, I'll venture for the vole.)  
Six Deans, they say, must bear the pall :  
(I wish I knew what king to call.)  
Madam, your husband will attend  
The funeral of so good a friend ?  
No, madam, 'tis a shocking sight :  
And he's engaged to-morrow night :  
My Lady Club will take it ill,  
If he should fail her at quadrille.  
He loved the Dean—(I lead a heart)  
But dearest friends, they say, must part.  
His time was come : he ran his race ;  
We hope he's in a better place."

He could make a phrase with a thorn to it, and define a character in a line (as when he defines a fop as "stock'd with the latest gibberish of the town"), but his verse lacks the memorableness of Dryden's and Pope's. His poetry is not often quoted, and his very Hudibrastic lines upon petty critics are probably the most familiar :

The vermin only tease and pinch  
Their foes superior by an inch ;  
So, naturalists observe a flea  
Has smaller fleas that on him prey,  
And these have smaller still to bite 'em,  
And so proceed *ad infinitum*.

Swift, however, would be forgotten to-day except by professors and professional critics, but for his prose satires. From the literary point of view his *Tale of a Tub* is the best of all ; at the dismal ending of his life Swift is said to have exclaimed : "Good God, what a genius I was when I wrote that book !" The title originated in the rumoured custom of throwing a tub to whales to play with to prevent them jostling a ship. After a whimsical dedication to "Prince Posterity," we have a dissertation on oratorical machines, and another on the humours of Grub Street—after which the serious matter begins, and we are introduced to the father who



dies and leaves legacies to his three sons, Peter (Church of Rome), Martin (Church of England), and Jack (Dissent).

His lesser works all show the satirical sparkle—sometimes bursting into a scorching flame of furious indignation—which was a new thing in English prose. It is as though he had continued the verse epigrams of Dryden, say with the latter's fluent easy prose in an absolutely novel form of composition.

But his fame in these latter days rests on *Gulliver's Travels*, which is a continuation of the Utopian idea with that of imaginary journeys burlesquing the old travellers' tales. Manifestly the book, even in its bowdlerised form, is a satire, and a ruthless one at that. Swift is not content, however, with making a fable or allegory; he develops the phases of Gulliver's story with the skill of H. G. Wells, say, as shown in his scientific fantasies, and uses every artifice—e.g. the details of Gulliver's career, the maps, and so forth—to create an illusion of reality in the reader's mind. That is why children, though they cannot grasp the satirical intention, read *Gulliver's Travels* with delight as a story of wonderful, yet credible events and experiences. Each section of the book displays the pettiness of mankind from a different angle.

In the "Voyage to Lilliput" we are shown ourselves as pigmies through the wrong end of a telescope, as it were. Our affairs, reduced to a miniature, seem diminutive and ridiculous—as a very small man does in the eyes of men of average dimensions. As Hazlitt points out, Gulliver's carrying off of the whole fleet of Blefuscu is "a mortifying stroke, aimed at national glory"—for the pomp and circumstance of naval warfare are reduced to toyshop scale and so made mirth-provoking.

Lying down behind a hillock, I took out my small perspective glass, and viewed the enemy's fleet at anchor, consisting of about fifty men-of-war, and a great number of transports: I then came back to my house, and gave order (for which I had a warrant) for a great quantity of the strongest cable and bars of iron. The cable was about as thick as packthread, and the bars of the length and size of a knitting needle. I trebled the cable to make it stronger, and, for the same reason, I twisted three of the iron bars together, binding the extremities into a hook. Having thus fixed fifty hooks to as many cables, I went back to the north-east coast, and putting off my coat, shoes, and stockings, walked into the sea. . . .

The enemy was so frightened when they saw me, that they leaped out of their ships, and swam to shore, where there could not be fewer than thirty thousand souls. I then took my tackling, and, fastening a hook to the hole at the prow of each, I tied all the cords together at the end. While I was thus employed, the enemy discharged several thousand arrows, many of which stuck in my hands and face, and, besides the excessive smart, gave me much disturbance in my work. . . . I went on boldly in spite of the enemy's arrows, many of which struck against the glasses of my spectacles, but without any other effect, farther than a little to discompose them. I had now fastened all the hooks, and, taking the

knot in my hand, began to pull, but not a ship would stir, for they were all too fast held by their anchors, so that the boldest part of my enterprise remained. I therefore let go the cord, and leaving the hooks fixed to the ships, I resolutely cut with my knife the cables that fastened the anchors, receiving above two hundred shots in my face and hands ; then I took up the knotted end of the cables to which my hooks were tied, and with great ease drew fifty of the enemy's largest men-of-war after me.

In Brobdingnag we look through the other end of the telescope. Gulliver is among giants who show a gigantic magnanimity, which contrasts with the pettiness of human beings.

It is almost impossible to open Swift's writings at any page without lighting upon some passage which has become a household word. Such, for instance, as the following :

And he gave it for his opinion, that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together.

He had been eight years upon a project for extracting sunbeams out of cucumbers, which were to be put in phials hermetically sealed, and let out to warm the air in raw inclement summers.

The reason why so few marriages are happy is because young ladies spend their time in making nets, not in making cages.

Swift is both a glory and a disgrace of world-literature. In his books, in his life, he expresses to the mind's eye the lowest deeps and the loftiest heights of which the mutable spirit of man is capable. In him Reason, as the eighteenth century understood it, committed suicide.

## READING LIST

For a general survey of this period see *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. ix, "From Steele and Addison to Pope and Swift" (Cambridge University Press), and J. Dennis, *The Age of Pope* (Bell).

### ALEXANDER POPE :

*The Works of Alexander Pope* (Methuen).

*Poetical Works* (Macmillan).

*Essay on Criticism*, edited by J. Churton Collins (Macmillan).

Sir Leslie Stephen's *Pope* in the *English Men of Letters Series* (Macmillan).

Edith Sitwell's *Alexander Pope* (Faber) is an individual study.

A volume of *Selections* is published in Penguin Books.



JOHN GAY :

*The Beggar's Opera* (Martin Secker).  
*Polly* (Gowans).

RICHARD STEELE :

*Selections from the Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian*, edited by Austin Dobson (Oxford University Press).  
*Essays*, edited by L. E. Steele (Macmillan).  
*The Complete Plays of Richard Steele* in the Mermaid Series (Benn).

JOSEPH ADDISON :

*The Works*, in 6 vols., with the Notes of Bishop Hurd, in Bohn's Library (Bell).  
*The Spectator*, in 4 vols., in Everyman's Library (Dent).  
W. J. Courthope's *Addison* in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

JONATHAN SWIFT :

*Gulliver's Travels* in the Everyman's Library (Dent).  
*The Tale of a Tub, The Battle of the Books*, etc. (1 vol.) in the Everyman's Library (Dent).  
Sir Leslie Stephen's *Swift* in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).  
Herbert Davis, *The Satires of Jonathan Swift* (Macmillan).

See also *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century*, by Leslie Stephen (Duckworth) ; and *Men of Letters and the English Public in the Eighteenth Century*, by A. Beljame (Routledge) ; also *Augustans and Romantics*, by H. V. D. Dyson and John Bott.

## XVIII

### THE RISE OF THE NOVEL

#### § 1

DEFOE

DANIEL DEFOE, the virtual founder of the British novel, was born in Fore Street in the City of London in 1659. His father was a butcher, and when he was a boy John Milton was one of his neighbours. The elder Defoe was a pious Dissenter and his enterprise was to make his son a preacher. Daniel was well educated, and after he had determined not to be a minister he set up for himself in business as an exporter of stockings in Freeman's Yard, Cornhill. It is impossible here to summarise all the incidents of a crowded life, all the ups and downs of an infinitely varied and generally troubled career. Defoe was writing almost to the day of his death, and he died a broken old man in lodgings off Moorfields in 1730. He was buried in the same graveyard as Bunyan and Isaac Watts the hymn-writer.

The world remembers Defoe with gratitude as the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, and has forgotten most of the rest of his voluminous writing. He was, indeed, the author of two hundred and fifty books ! He wrote other novels besides *Robinson Crusoe*, of which the most interesting to-day are *Captain Jack*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Roxana*. They abound in intimate descriptions of London's common life in that period. He wrote history and biography, books of travel and poems, treatises on the complete gentleman and the complete tradesman, manuals of conduct for parents and lovers, political pamphlets and satires. At one time in his life he wrote a newspaper with his own hand three times a week. He earned a great deal of money and lost it, and most of his life was spent in a very sea of trouble.

Defoe was a man of amazing energy and originality. He was a Whig, honestly interested in supporting the Union of Scotland, in preserving the Protestant succession to the throne, and in the repeal of the laws that penalised Dissenters. He was certainly not over-scrupulous. At one time he secured an engagement on the staff of Tory papers in order to take out the sting of attacks on the Whigs. But he did not live in a scrupulous age. Perhaps the most ironic incident in a career composed of irony was his writing of a burlesque attack on the Hanoverian succession, which was



read seriously by dull people and landed its author in prison. It is interesting to recall that so fertile was Defoe's mind that among many modern enterprises foreshadowed in his works are a government register for sailors, agricultural credit banks, and national poor relief.

## § 2

Defoe was nearly sixty when *Robinson Crusoe* was published. The idea was of course taken from the story of the four solitary months that Alexander Selkirk spent on the island of Juan Fernandez in 1704. The character of Crusoe was to some extent the character of his creator—in his industry, his refusal to be beaten, his courage, and his faith in God. *Robinson Crusoe* is a novel of "human contrivance and homely wisdom." There is no humour in it, no pathos, and no mystery. It is a simple story written for simple people by a great master of narrative and description, and the book has an additional interest for the workaday world because of its author's Kiplingesque knowledge of the technicalities of half a dozen trades. Incredible as it may seem, Defoe had great difficulty in finding a publisher. He showed *Robinson Crusoe* to the booksellers of Lombard Street, the Strand, Westminster, and Little Britain in vain. But William Taylor, of the Ship, in Paternoster Row, who was young enough to be Defoe's son, saw his chance and seized it. Between April, when it appeared, and August, four editions were called for, and even a hostile critic had to admit that it was "famed from Tuttle Street to Limehouse Hole," and that "every old woman leaves it as a legacy with *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Practice of Piety*, and *God's Revenge Against Murther*, to her posterity." The charm of the story really lies not in adventure, but in its picture of a man forced to live the simple life, to build, to bake, to contrive, and to preserve his cheerfulness and piety. Dickens remarked that in all its pages there is nothing to make a man laugh or cry; and this is about true. Yet *Robinson Crusoe* stands alone; it has been translated into countless languages, and has been read even by Arabs in the desert.

The importance of *Robinson Crusoe* in literary history is that it is fiction deliberately intended to pass as fact. Charles Lamb said of Defoe's stories: "It is impossible to believe, while you are reading them, that a real person is not narrating to you everywhere nothing but what really happened to himself." And Lamb adds that Defoe's success was largely due to "the extreme homeliness of his style." He was a realist to the extent of making his characters speak as such people speak in real life, and, as most of his characters belong to the class of the unlettered, we have in Defoe, as both Coleridge and Lamb have pointed out, "infinite repetition and an

over-acted exactness" which merely add to the realism. Defoe's greatest triumph in "inventing truth" is his *Journal of the Plague Year*, absolutely fiction, accepted as fact when it was published, and since often quoted by trustful historians as a record of actual events. Defoe had been only five years old in the year of the Plague.

*Robinson Crusoe* may be properly regarded as an early attempt at realistic fiction, and in his *Memoirs of a Cavalier* Defoe invented the form of the historical novel, in which real and imaginary persons are both introduced, the method of Walter Scott and Alexandre Dumas. In all, Defoe wrote six novels, three of them picaresque stories of crime—in each case with well-emphasised morals, the tediousness of which does not take away from the interest in the stories as vivid pictures of English life in the reign of Queen Anne.

## § 3

## SAMUEL RICHARDSON

Despite the success of the French novelists of the early eighteenth century, and we may mention Le Sage, the author of *Gil Blas*, and the Abbé Prévost, author of *Manon Lescaut*; despite Defoe and the earlier English experiments in fiction, the English novel, as we know it, was not created until Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, was published in 1740. Novel-reading has often been denounced by moralists, and it is, therefore, interesting to note that *Pamela*, "in every strict sense the earliest English novel," was written to inculcate morality and to protect the inexperienced. Richardson was a moralist above all other things. Johnson said that he taught "the passions to move at the command of virtue."

Samuel Richardson was born in Derbyshire in 1689. Very little is known about his boyhood, though he has told us that when he was eleven he took on himself to write an admonitory letter, full of Scriptural texts, to a backbiting widow of fifty, and that when he was thirteen he wrote love-letters for a number of young women who were acquaintances of his family. When he was seventeen he was apprenticed to a printer in Aldersgate Street, and in 1719 he began business for himself in a court off Fleet Street. Two years later he completed his resemblance to Hogarth's industrious apprentice by marrying his old master's daughter. Richardson was fifty years old when he first began to write *Pamela*. The heroine, a simple, innocent country girl, led astray by her dissolute master, conquers in the end, and is rewarded by becoming his wife. *Pamela* was followed by *Clarissa, or the Adventures of a Young Lady*, in 1748, and by the *History of Sir Charles Grandison* in 1753 and 1754. Richardson was an eighteenth-



century middle-class cockney, sharing all the prejudices and limitations of his class. To quote Leslie Stephen: "He looked upon freethinkers with such horror that he will not allow even his worst villains to be religious sceptics; he shares the profound reverence of the shopkeepers for the upper classes who are his customers, and he rewards virtue with a coach and six. And yet this mild little man, with the very narrowest intellectual limitations, writes a book which makes a mark not only in England but in Europe, and is imitated by Rousseau in the book which set more than one generation weeping; *Clarissa*, moreover, was accepted as the masterpiece of its kind, and she moved not only Englishmen but Germans and Frenchmen to sympathetic tears."

Richardson told his stories by means of letters, and in this way he was able to reveal much more of the minds of his characters than can be revealed by the autobiographical method of *Robinson Crusoe*.

Judged from the modern point of view, Richardson is a tiresome mawkish sentimentalist. Leslie Stephen complains that he rubs the noses of his readers in the agony of his heroines, "squeezing the last drop of bitterness out of every incident." But it must be remembered that Richardson wrote for his own time and particularly for the women of his own time, and apart from their importance in literary history, Richardson's novels played a considerable part in the development of the democratic idea. It was a novel idea in the eighteenth century that a servant girl simply became a heroine of romance. From every point of view *Clarissa* is Richardson's most important novel. Austin Dobson has admirably summarised its plot:

Entangled henceforth in an inextricable network of lies, intrigue and deception, the poor girl, alienated from her friends, and unsuspecting in her own goodness and purity, is decoyed into the company of some of the most worthless of her sex and finally betrayed while under the influence of opiates. After various experiences in a spunging-house, and different hiding-places, she finally settles down, broken-hearted, to die. Her relations reject her; and though Lovelace, in his intermittent moments of remorse, is willing to marry her, her pride and inherent nobility of character, make such a solution out of the question. Serene in the consciousness of her innocence, "unviolated (as she says) in her will," but mortally wounded, *Clarissa* gradually fades away, and finally dies, leaving her suddenly awakened relatives distracted by remorse for her fate, while Lovelace, who has richly deserved the gallows, is compassionately killed in a duel by her cousin and guardian, Colonel William Morden.

Both *Pamela* and *Clarissa* were translated into French by the Abbé Prévost, and Richardson's novels had an enormous contemporary vogue on the Continent. Diderot, the great eighteenth-century French philosopher, considered him the equal of Moses, Homer, Euripides, and Sophocles. He was warmly



admired by Mme de Staël and by Rousseau, whose *La Nouvelle Héloïse* was modelled on *Clarissa*; and years afterwards Alfred de Musset, the French poet, declared that *Clarissa* was the greatest novel in the world. There is an amusing story of Madame de Staël, a super-sentimentalist, journeying all the way from Paris to London to weep on Richardson's tomb. She stopped at the Golden Cross Hotel and was found, the next morning, weeping bitter tears in St. Bride's churchyard in Fleet Street on the tomb of the wrong Richardson, a worthy but unliterary butcher.

## § 4

## HENRY FIELDING

If Richardson invented the English novel, Henry Fielding, the Hogarth of literature, gave it, for the first time, absolute literary distinction. When he began to write, Fielding had already acquired a comprehensive knowledge of the life of his time. He had come into personal contact with all sorts and conditions of men. Fielding was not only a great writer, he was, in all essentials, a typical Englishman, as Leslie Stephen has written, "the big, full-blooded, vigorous mass of roast beef who will stand no nonsense, and whose contempt for the fanciful and arbitrary tends towards the coarse and materialistic."

Henry Fielding was born in 1707 near Glastonbury in Somerset. He was educated at Eton and came to London in 1727, among other things, for the first time making the acquaintance of his famous second cousin, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. For some years Fielding gained a more or less precarious livelihood by writing plays. His mother was dead, his father had married again, his allowance from home was small and intermittent, and, as he himself said, he had to choose between being a hackney coachman or a hackney writer. He married in 1734, but this did not much modify his Bohemian life. He was called to the Bar when he was thirty-three and joined the Western Circuit. His first novel, *Joseph Andrews*, was published in 1742, for which he received from his publisher the sum of £83, 11s. It was intended as a burlesque of Richardson's *Pamela*, and Fielding set out to ridicule Richardson by transferring Pamela's embarrassment to her brother. The story is remarkable for the famous character of Parson Adams, the lovable country curate, as distinguished for his poverty as his learning; his ignorance of the world, his zeal and virtuous simplicity, his absence of mind, his oddities and little predicaments, excite the mirth and win the love and esteem of every reader of *Joseph Andrews*. Goldsmith copied the character of Parson Adams when he wrote *The Vicar of Wakefield*.



In 1743 he published the *History of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*, an ironic biography of the notorious thief-taker, illustrating, as Austin Dobson neatly says, "the general proposition that greatness without goodness is no better than badness." *Tom Jones, or the History of a Foundling*, was published in 1749, Fielding being paid £700 by his publisher. *Amelia* was published in 1751, the author receiving £1000. In 1748 Fielding was appointed a Justice of the Peace for Middlesex and Westminster, an office which gave him £300 a year and a house in Bow Street. Despite constant ill-health he was assiduous in his legal duties, writing valuable pamphlets and striving hard to deal with the insistent roguery of eighteenth-century London, so vividly portrayed in his own *Jonathan Wild* and in his friend Hogarth's drawings. In 1754 he became so desperately ill that he resigned his office and left London for Lisbon, suffering horrible discomforts on the journey. The story of the voyage is told in the pamphlet *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*, published after its author's death. Fielding reached Lisbon in August 1754. He died there two months later, and was buried in the English cemetery.

Richardson wrote for women. Fielding wrote for men. Richardson was a super-sentimentalist, Fielding was a realist. The two writers were antipathetic. In his famous eulogy of Fielding's "athletic and boisterous genius," Thackeray says: "He couldn't do otherwise than laugh at the puny, cockney bookseller, pouring out endless volumes of sentimental twaddle, and hold him up to scorn as a mollcoddle and a milksop. His genius had been nursed on sack-posset, and not on dishes of tea. His muse had sung the loudest in tavern choruses, had seen the daylight streaming in over thousands of emptied bowls, and reeled home to chambers on the shoulders of the watchman. Richardson's goddess was attended by old maids and dowagers, and fed on muffins and bohea."

Critical opinion has acclaimed Fielding's genius. Hazlitt said: "As a painter of real life he was equal to Hogarth; as a mere observer of human nature, he was little inferior to Shakespeare." Gibbon, the great historian, a man not given to fulsome eulogy, declared: "The successors of Charles V may disdain their brethren of England: but the romance of *Tom Jones*, that exquisite picture of human manners, will outlive the palace of the Escorial and the Imperial Eagle of Austria." It has. The Escorial was partly destroyed by fire in 1872. The Imperial Eagle of Austria was cast into the dust in 1918. And the world still reads *Tom Jones*. Gibbon was a true prophet, and as Thackeray said: "To have your name mentioned by Gibbon is like having it written on the dome of St. Peter's. Pilgrims from all the world admire and behold it."

*Tom Jones* is without question Fielding's masterpiece, and it remains one of the half-dozen greatest novels in the English language. It does not



contain so lovable a creation as Parson Adams in *Joseph Andrews*, but it bristles with clearly defined characters as human and as good to know as the characters created by Dickens himself. Allworthy, that compound of coldness and excellence ; the younger Blifil, the hypocrite ; Squire Western, the boisterous, brutal, jovial Jacobite country gentleman of the Georgian era ; Parson Thwackum, the bigot ; the immortal Partridge, of ignorance and vanity complete ; Lady Bellaston, the fashionable sensualist, who, as Austin Dobson has suggested, might well have been drawn by Balzac ; Sophia Western herself, "the first unsentimentalised flesh and blood heroine." The hero, Tom Jones, is a rake, fond of drink and play, scornfully described by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu as "a sorry scoundrel." But Tom Jones was brave, generous, and courteous, in his vices the child of his time, and, despite his vices, very much a man.

A great writer, a great wit, a man of unconquerable spirit was "manly, English, Harry Fielding."

## § 5

## LAURENCE STERNE

Laurence Sterne, the author of *Tristram Shandy*, was born in Ireland in November 1713. His father was an ensign in a foot regiment which had served in Flanders and which was disbanded the day after Laurence was born. For a year Laurence with his father and mother stayed with his grandmother in Yorkshire, and then, for nine years, the family led the uncomfortable wandering life of an eighteenth-century soldier, never staying for more than a few months in one place. Sterne retained a considerable affection for his father, who was to some extent the model of "My Uncle Toby."

When he was eighteen he went, with the help of his relatives, to Jesus College, Cambridge. He took Holy Orders, and in 1738 obtained, through the influence of an uncle, the living of Sutton-in-the-Forest, near York. He married in 1741 and was presented to the neighbouring living of Stillington, doing duty at both places and also becoming a prebendary of York Cathedral. The first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy* were published at York in 1759, and they at once made Sterne famous. Other volumes appeared in 1761, 1762, and 1765. He was lionised by London society, and incidentally presented with the perpetual curacy of Coxwold.

Edmund Gosse has described *Tristram Shandy* as an example "of the kind of loosely strung reflective fiction which is hardly a narrative at all." In the strict sense of the word, *Tristram Shandy* is perhaps no more a novel than *The Sentimental Journey*. It is, however, the work of one of the great



English humorists, and it contains in *Uncle Toby* at least a character with a right of place among the immortals. *Tristram Shandy* purposes to be the life of Tristram Shandy, but it is nothing of the sort. At the beginning of the book, the real hero is Shandy senior, who personifies theory run mad, and incidentally, in this first part, there is a vivid sketch, none too complimentary, of Yorick, the incumbent of the parish, who is Sterne himself. As the book proceeds, "My Uncle Toby," the old half-pay soldier, is its hero. Hazlitt has declared that "My Uncle Toby" is "the most unoffending of God's creatures" and "one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature." Walter Sichel has summarised "My Uncle Toby" as : "A man human in every vein, simple, serious, an amusing grown-up child whose long experience of war taught him to love mankind more than glory or pleasure, and to find in the soldier's temper the greatest surety for peace ; loyal, brave, modest, affectionate, reverent, who 'never spoke of the being and attributes of God but with hesitation' ; considerate for all, eager to protect the lives and fortunes of the *few* from the plunderings of the *many*."

Carlyle compares Sterne to Cervantes. Other writers have found resemblance between him and Rabelais. But while Rabelais guffawed, Sterne sniggered. The coarseness and indecency of his writing cannot be accounted for by the fact that he lived in a coarser age. It was something inherent in the man, sick in health and mean in mind, who, despite his gift of humour, was barred from real greatness by the qualities of his soul. He moved Thackeray to something like disgust. "There is not," wrote the author of *Vanity Fair*, "a page in Sterne's writing but has something that were better away, a latent corruption—a hint, as of an impure presence. . . . The foul Satyr's eyes leer out of the leaves constantly." And Coleridge declared that Sterne should be censured for "using the best dispositions of our nature as the panders and condiments for the basest." All this is true—but "My Uncle Toby" remains !

In 1765 Sterne made a long tour through Italy and France, the result of which was his famous *Sentimental Journey*. Three days after the publication of this book in 1768, Sterne died in his lodgings in Old Bond Street.

On a March afternoon in 1768 a party sat at dinner in John Crawford's rooms in Clifford Street. The Dukes of Roxburghe and Grafton were there, and Garrick and Hume. They all knew that in Bond Street, a stone's-throw away, Laurence Sterne was lying ill, and by general consent a footman was sent to inquire how he did. That footman was the only person who saw the author of *Tristram Shandy* die. Sent upstairs by the landlady, he found the great author *in extremis*. Afterwards he wrote some curious memoirs, in which the scene is described : "I went into the room and he was just a-dying. I waited ten minutes, and in five he said, 'Now it is

come !' He put up his hands as if to stop a blow, and died in a minute." Where this happened Agnew's Art Gallery now stands.

In addition to *Tristram Shandy* and *The Sentimental Journey*, Sterne published several volumes of sermons, which, according to modern divines, have many outstanding merits. The collection of his letters was published some seven years after his death.

## § 6

## TOBIAS SMOLLETT

Tobias Smollett was born in Dunbartonshire in 1721. He qualified as a doctor at Glasgow University and was apprenticed to a surgeon in that city. At the age of eighteen he made the journey south which every ambitious Scotch youth has made for generations, a journey which he afterwards described in the early chapters of his *Roderick Random*. In 1741 he obtained a position as surgeon's mate on H.M.S. *Cumberland*. He served in the Navy until 1744, and then, having married the daughter of a Jamaica planter, he set up as a surgeon in Downing Street, failing, however, to make much of a living either as a doctor or as a playwright. *The Adventures of Roderick Random* was published in 1748, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* in 1749, *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* in 1753, *The Adventures of Launcelot Greaves* in 1762, and *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* in 1771. In addition to these novels, Smollett wrote plays, travel books, poetry, medical pamphlets, and a history of England.

The finest of Smollett's few poems is "The Tears of Scotland." It was written after the Battle of Culloden, which set all London "mafficking." The first and last of its seven stanzas are these :

Mourn, hapless Caledonia, mourn  
Thy banished peace, thy laurels torn  
Thy sons, for valour long renowned,  
Lie slaughtered on their native ground.  
Thy hospitable roofs no more  
Invite the stranger to the door ;  
In smoky ruins sunk they lie,  
The monuments of cruelty.

While the warm blood bedews my veins,  
And unimpaired remembrance reigns,  
Resentment of my country's fate  
Within my filial breast shall beat ;



And, spite of her insulting foe,  
 My sympathizing verse shall flow :  
 " Mourn, hapless Caledonia, mourn  
 Thy banished peace, thy laurels torn."

Le Sage was Smollett's master, and in *Roderick Random* we have the same series of adventures more or less loosely linked together as we find in *Gil Blas*, the adventures being largely the author's own, the result being "a vigorous and swinging tale of adventure."

*Peregrine Pickle* has many resemblances to *Roderick Random*, and is even more autobiographical. One characteristic of *Peregrine Pickle* is that, for money down, Smollett put into his book the account of two living people who had nothing to do with the story, thus, as Mr. Hannay says, combining journalism with novel-writing.

Sir Walter Scott considered that *Humphrey Clinker* is the "most pleasing of Smollett's novels"; and all the world agrees with him. Thackeray says: "*Humphrey Clinker* is, I do think, the most laughable story that has ever been written since the goodly art of novel-writing began."

"In *Humphrey Clinker*," says George Saintsbury, "we have the very best of all his works. It is written in the letter form, the scenes and humours of many places in England and Scotland are rendered with admirable picturesqueness, while the book has seldom been excelled for humorous character of the broad and farcical kind. Matthew Bramble, the testy hypochondriac squire who is at heart one of the best of men, and in head not one of the foolishest; his sour-visaged and greedy sister Tabitha; her maid Winifred Jenkins, who has learnt the art of grotesque misspelling from Swift's Mrs. Harris, and has improved upon the teaching; the Scotch soldier of fortune, Lismahago—these are among the capital figures of English fiction."

Like Fielding, Smollett died and was buried in a foreign country—in Leghorn, in 1771.

## § 7

### MRS. RADCLIFFE AND MISS EDGEWORTH

Mrs. Radcliffe, the author of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and other stories, was an ingenious writer, much admired by Scott, a good story-teller, unhampered by a sense of humour, whose style has been faithfully copied in the modern novelette. She dealt in the night side of life, in the mystery of desolate valleys and tapestried corridors, and in the art of making a reader's blood run cold. As Sir Walter Scott, who respected her genius, said, her appeal was to "the passion of fear, whether excited by natural

dangers or by the suggestions of superstition. . . . To break off the narrative when it seemed just on the point of becoming most interesting—to extinguish a lamp just when a parchment containing some hideous secret ought to be read—to exhibit shadowy forms and half-heard sounds of woe—are resources which Mrs. Radcliffe employed with more effect than any other writer of romance.” A contemporary wrote of her after her time :

O Radcliffe ! thou once wert the charmer  
Of girls who sat reading all night !  
Thy heroes were striplings in armour,  
Thy heroines damsels in white.

Such a girl was Jane Austen's first heroine, Catherine Morland, through whom (in *Northanger Abbey*) she pokes fun at the Radcliffe tradition.

In the year 1800 Maria Edgeworth published *Castle Rackrent*. Miss Edgeworth was essentially a moralist. She called her stories “Moral Tales,” and she was interested in the homely rather than in the heroic virtues. She was an Irishwoman, and when Scott wrote *Waverley* he professed that his ambition was “in some degree to emulate the admirable Irish portraits of Miss Edgeworth.” Contemporary with Miss Edgeworth was the Scottish Susan Ferrier, whom Scott called his “sister shadow,” a novelist with a somewhat bitter wit more like Jane Austen than the “moral” Maria Edgeworth.

## § 8

## JANE AUSTEN

With Jane Austen, this survey of the beginning of modern fiction may fitly end.

How did Jane Austen excel ? The answer is prompt. She was a realist. And as a realist, within her own delicately drawn pen-and-ink circle, she was perfect—a word often applied too carelessly, but here most miraculously justified. She was the chronicler of that most breathless and fascinating fairy-tale in the world, the fairy-tale of her own daily life. Jane Austen set down, for our infinite cosy content, the enthralling details of ourselves and our neighbours—for in essentials a century is lightly spanned—walking and driving and conversing ; eating, too, with greater or less appetite, according to the state of our affections. Minor differences there were, of course, between Jane Austen's characters and ourselves. They set higher store on the outward observances of good breeding than we do nowadays. For the rest, they gossiped, and fell in love, and danced, and made mistakes ; and occasionally travelled a little by post-chaise or carriage. And if they suffered, it was usually more annoyance than tragedy.



Jane Austen put it all down because it never struck her that it might not be interesting. She was not preoccupied with Form or Art or the Limitations of the Novel, or other inventions of the highbrow to hamper spontaneity. How marvellously Jane Austen, with her elfish talent for burlesquing a prevalent mania, which twinkles and stings in *Love and Friendship* and *Northanger Abbey*, would have twinkled and stung at the expense of an English Hotel Rambouillet !

Yet, as Saintsbury has admirably said, "simple as are the plots, they are worked out with extraordinary closeness and completeness, and the characters and dialogue are of such astonishing *finesse* and life that it would hardly matter if there were no plot at all. From first to last this hold on life never fails Miss Austen, nor does the simple, suggestive, half-ironic style in which she manages to convey her meaning. Not even Scott's or Thackeray's characters dwell in the mind more securely than John Thorpe, the bragging, babbling undergraduate in *Northanger Abbey*, and the feather-brained, cold-hearted flirt, his sister Isabella ; than the Bennet family in *Pride and Prejudice*, every member of which is a masterpiece, and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, the arrogant lady patroness, and Mr. Collins, her willing toady ; than Mrs. Norris, half sycophant, half tyrant, in *Mansfield Park* ; than the notable chatterer Miss Bates in *Emma*."

## § 9

Biographers regret that the definite facts which can be supplied about Jane Austen's life and doings are few. She was born at Steventon in Hampshire in 1775 ; her father was a clergyman of moderate means ; she had five brothers, four older and one younger than herself ; and one intimate and adored elder sister, Cassandra. Two of her brothers became sailors. Jane had a moderately sufficient education and went to school at Reading. She was attractive to look at, and accomplished in games of skill, drawing, music, and needlework ; graceful and "finished" in all her movements, and an animated correspondent. As for her literary career, it was, like her life, without extremes ; she was neither left to pine in a garret nor feasted as a genius. In fact, she rarely visited London at all ; after Steventon, her father moved with his family to Bath. After his death, Mrs. Austen, with Jane and Cassandra, went to live at Southampton.

When Jane Austen died at Winchester in 1817, at the age of forty-two, she was practically unknown in the literary world. She had not put her name to her four published novels (*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*), though she had allowed her authorship to be known among her friends. In an age of abounding literary society she had



met no famous writer or editor and had corresponded with none. She was never in touch with the book-market. Her novels usually lay in her desk a long time before they appeared, and they did not come out in the order in which she wrote them. Her earliest was sold to a Bath publisher in 1803 for £10, and he did nothing with it. A few years later she bought it back from him for the same sum, he little knowing that she was the author of four popular novels. This, the earliest of her stories, did not appear, however, until a year after her death, when it was accompanied through the press by her latest, *Persuasion*. In all she had received £700 for her novels at the time of her death. She was entirely without the money-making idea, and when she received £150 for *Sense and Sensibility* she considered this sum "a prodigious recompense for what had cost her nothing."

## § 10

The lack of facts in our knowledge of Jane Austen certainly need not mean a lack of intimacy. If we know little, we also know everything. Her books are there; and surmising where two twos undoubtedly make five, is always a fascinating pastime. Thus we surmise that she was indolent, for she rarely troubled to invent situations or emotions, but utilised those that were handy, and within her easy reach and cognisance. The same plot, what there was of it, served again and again. Therefore, we argue from analogy, she also did not invent her characters, but drew them from among her acquaintances. It is a pleasing reflection that Mr. Collins and Mrs. Allen and Selina with her "barouche-landau," were actual living people. She had the rare vision to see what was already there, and to enchant it into delicious immobility for our future benefit. Vision, but no imagination. That lack of imagination might account for her unseeing indifference to the lower classes; she can sympathise with straitened means—but her understanding halts and goes numb and blind at the possibility of no means at all.

This, too, Jane Austen's books have revealed to us about Jane Austen: that she lived her short life singularly free from fear. Fear breeds obsessions, and no obsessions have found an outlet in those six novels, so precious for their well-balanced outlook and serene philosophy; except, perhaps, the fear of misunderstanding, and parting through misunderstanding; this, indeed, occurs over and over again between her hero and heroine. Elizabeth and Darcy are separated through Wickham's misrepresentations; Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney through the inexplicable behaviour of the latter's father; Emma and Knightly because he firmly believes Emma has given her heart to Frank Churchill; Elinor Dashwood and



Edward . . . the list swells ; but perhaps the most feeling example is the long misunderstanding between Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth, owing to Anne's submission to worldly persuasion that he was not a suitable match. *Persuasion* was the last and most mature of Jane Austen's books, and one cannot miss in it the depth of personal conviction in Anne's ruined happiness—for twenty-seven was at that period a hopeless age for a woman to have reached without attaining matrimony. Who cares to, may read a hint of longing in *Persuasion's* final chapters of perfect reconciliation between Anne and Wentworth : " Thus it should have been—thus it might have been . . . for me ! " Were those the author's secret thoughts at the time of writing ? Her biographers have traced, from various sources, the existence of one outstanding love-affair in Jane Austen's life. Whether pride or circumstances or death prevented a happy conclusion, is not known. But the knowledge of it adds poignancy to the fact that her every last chapter is a summary of quiet rapture with anticipations into a future of unbroken wedded felicity.

In a letter to a friend Jane Austen compared her novels to " a little bit of ivory, two inches thick," on which she worked " with a brush so fine as to produce little effect after much labour." Never was there such exquisite manners-painting ; but the plots are of the slightest. For example, that of *Sense and Sensibility* is really a study of the opposing characters of Elinor Dashwood, who stands for " Sense," and of her sister Marianne, who is the embodiment of " Sensibility " ; while the plot is just the narrative of the widely different manner in which they act towards their lovers and their friends. In *Pride and Prejudice* there are again two opposing characters, a priggish lover, Darcy, and a girl of sense and spirit, Elizabeth Bennet, and the plot, if so it can be called, tells only how they squabbled, came gradually to like each other, and were married and lived happily at last. *Mansfield Park* is the story of a young girl, Fanny Price, left penniless, who is adopted into the family circle of her cousins, two sisters, and a son, Edmond ; and the plot is little more than the way in which he falls in and out of love with Fanny and how they are married in the end. But these gossamer threads of story are woven into a fabric all a-glisten with the lights and shades of life.

Her principal themes were family life, and—what is rarer in to-day's realism, but evidently played an important part then—neighbourly life, its ebb and flow, actions and reactions, gossip, opportunities of match-making, and discussions as to the exact niceties of behaviour. The complications which modern fiction creates out of temperament then arose mainly from class distinction. Preoccupation with class distinction is so clearly the basis of all major and minor incidents and reflections in Jane Austen's books, that it cannot be ignored as mere personal snobbery on the part of



the author. Obviously the upper classes were then soaked to the bone in it. Jane could chuckle at the exaggerated snobbery of Mr. Collins, of Lady Catherine de Bourgh, of General Tilney and Sir Walter Elliott and Mr. Elton ; but she was certainly not free from it herself ; she deprecates marriage where there is any disparity of birth ; she converses most seriously on incomes, dowries, rank, and occupation ; a slip of good manners in one of her creatures is at once shown up and dwelt upon at length. Emma talks pages of sheer rot to her protégée, Harriett, about the " consequence " she will gain by entering a house like Hartfield on equal footing with its young mistress ; Darcy is condemned for jibbing at Elizabeth because some of her relations are in trade—and this, with Emma's reluctance to honour the worthy Coles with her presence at dinner, proves that trade was then very far from mixing with gentility ; and that, in spite of the French Revolution, democracy was a long way from England.

The mention of the French Revolution reminds us that although the actual society in which Jane Austen lived (and in which her characters may be assumed to have lived) was shaken to its foundations by the Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, there is not the least indication of these events in the novels, save of one young man who rather vaguely goes a-soldiering. Her concern is entirely personal.

Apparently, snobbery and prejudice were at this period, as eternally, peculiar to the older generation ; and the young folk, impatient of restriction, were just beginning to emerge from it, winning for themselves more freedom of thought and independence of movement than formerly.

The theme which never alters ! The novelists of a hundred years hence will surely still be writing of it.

But Jane Austen chiefly owes her fame to her exquisite and unparalleled gift of comedy. Posterity can never be sufficiently grateful for Mr. Collins, Mr. Woodhouse, Miss Bates, Lady Bertram, Mr. Rushworth, Isabella Thorpe, Miss Jennings, Mrs. Bennet.

To the reader who asks that a novel shall take him " out of himself," Jane Austen's appeal is small. But is that quality the test of a good novel ? Is not the true test its power to take us *into* ourselves—that is to say, into our human nature, of which the true and lively exhibition is the very purpose of all drama ? It is impossible to make truth look small. The map of Jane Austen's world looks insignificant at a first glance, but, within it, all is truth, wit, sense, and proportion. The plot seems to be inevitable to the characters, and the characters the very natives of the plot.



READING LIST

THE RISE OF THE NOVEL.

G. Saintsbury's *The English Novel* (Dent); Walter Raleigh, *The English Novel* (Murray).

Oliver Elton : *A Survey of English Literature : 1730-1780* (Arnold).

DANIEL DEFOE.

*Robinson Crusoe*, *Captain Singleton*, *The Memoirs of a Cavalier*, and *Journal of the Plague Year* are all obtainable in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

W. Minto's *Defoe* in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan); J. R. Sutherland's *Defoe* (Methuen), which is the better book.

HENRY FIELDING.

*Tom Jones* (2 vols.), *Amelia* (2 vols.), and *Joseph Andrews* (1 vol.), all in Everyman's Library (Dent).

Austin Dobson's *Fielding* in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

SAMUEL RICHARDSON.

*Clarissa Harlowe*, *Pamela*, Everyman's Library (Dent), and *Sir Charles Grandison* (Routledge).

TOBIAS SMOLLETT.

*Roderick Random*, *Peregrine Pickle* (2 vols.), Everyman's Library (Dent); *Sir Launcelot Greaves* and *Adventures of an Atom* (1 vol.), *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (Routledge); *Humphry Clinker*, World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

LAURENCE STERNE.

*A Sentimental Journey*, and *Tristram Shandy*: both in the World's Classics. *Selected Works*, edited by Douglas Grant (Hart Davies).

JANE AUSTEN.

There are, of course, many editions of Jane Austen's works. Messrs. Macmillan publish an excellent edition with Introductions by Austin Dobson, as follows: *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*.

*Jane Austen and her Art*, by M. E. Lascelles (Oxford University Press).

*Jane Austen*, by Elizabeth Jenkins and *Jane Austen*, by Beatrice Kean Seymour (Michael Joseph): sympathetic studies by contemporary woman novelists.

## XIX

### THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETS

#### § I

##### CHATTERTON AND SMART

**T**HOMAS CHATTERTON is the most pathetic and dramatic figure in the history of English poetry of the period between Pope and Burns. He was born at Bristol in 1752. For generations his family had held the office of sexton in the church of St. Mary Redcliffe, and during the poet's life his uncle occupied the family position. His father, who died before his birth, was a musician, something of a poet, and a student of occultism. Chatterton spent his childhood roaming about St. Mary's, learning from his uncle the story of the knights and ecclesiastics whose tombs are in the church, and spelling out old deeds and manuscripts which he found in the muniment room.

He was a lonely precocious boy, writing clever satires before he was twelve, and living his real life in the bygone ages of chivalry and colour. While he was still at school he imagined the romance of one Thomas Rowley, a fifteenth-century monk and poet, whose patron was Master William Canynge, a famous Bristol worthy. Chatterton's persistent study of old manuscripts and his ceric understanding of mediæval England enabled him to write a queer kind of old English, the merit and beauty of which may be gathered from the following quotation from his "The Storie of William Canynge" :

Straight was I carried back to times of yore,  
Whilst Canynge swathed yet in fleshly bed,  
And saw all actions which had been before,  
And all the scroll of Fate unravelled ;  
And when the fate-marked babe acome to sight,  
I saw him eager gasping after light.  
In all his sheepen gambols and child's play,  
In every merrymaking, fair, or wake,  
I kenn'd a perple light of wisdom's ray ;  
He ate down learning with the wastel-cake :  
As wise as any of the aldermen,  
He'd wit enow to make a mayor at ten.



The boy knew that if he admitted that he himself was the author of poems written in an archaic jargon, no one would read them. So he launched one of the most famous of all literary masquerades. He pretended that his poems were the actual work of Thomas Rowley, and that he had discovered the manuscript in a chest in St. Mary Redcliffe. In order to get his manuscript printed, he wrote to Horace Walpole, whose "Castle of Otranto" had just been published, and whose interest in mediæval romance seemed to assure a measure of sympathy and understanding. At first Walpole was interested ; but when Chatterton wrote to ask his help in obtaining congenial occupation in London, the ever-cautious Horace discovered that the boy's poetry was really modern and coldly advised the poet to stick to his position in an attorney's office and to postpone the writing of poetry "until he should have made a fortune."

One of his most beautiful pieces of verse is the Minstrel's Song in "Aella," from which we quote the first four verses :

O sing unto my roundelay ;  
 O drop the briny tear with me ;  
 Dance no more on holiday,  
 Like a running river be ;  
 My love is dead,  
 Gone to his death-bed,  
 All under the willow-tree.

Black his hair as the winter night,  
 White his neck as the summer snow,  
 Red his face as the morning light,  
 Cold he lies in the grave below :  
 My love is dead,  
 Gone to his death-bed,  
 All under the willow-tree.

Sweet his tongue as the throstle's note,  
 Quick in dance as thought can be ;  
 Deft his tabor, cudgel stout ;  
 Oh ! he lies by the willow-tree.  
 My love is dead,  
 Gone to his death-bed,  
 All under the willow-tree.

Hark ! the raven flaps his wing,  
 In the briered dell below ;  
 Hark ! the death-owl loud doth sing,  
 To the nightmares as they go.  
 My love is dead,  
 Gone to his death-bed,  
 All under the willow-tree.

In the spring of 1770 Chatterton came to London, where, for some months, he contrived to support himself by hack journalism, writing political tirades in the manner of Junius. Payment was bad indeed in the Grub Street of the eighteenth century : Chatterton received only a shilling for each of his articles and less than eighteen pence for his poems. Desperate and disappointed, too proud to accept charity or to go back home, Chatterton poisoned himself with arsenic on August 24, 1770, in his garret in Brook Street, Holborn. He was then seventeen years and nine months old.

Chatterton was buried in the grounds attached to the Shoe Lane work-house in the parish of St. Andrew's, Holborn. His actual achievements may be of small value, but of his genius there can be no question, and one can only guess what he might have become had the circumstances of his life been happier.

One other tragic genius of this period was the poet, Christopher Smart (1722-1770), author of one supreme poem, "The Song of David." Smart, a brilliant scholar at Cambridge, came to London to try his fortune at literature. As with Chatterton, the experiment was a failure ; and reckless and intemperate he eventually became so unbalanced that he was put into an asylum. Here, denied pen and paper, he indented on the wainscoting of his room the wonderful cadences of his poem. It remained unknown until Browning mentioned its author in his "Parleyings with certain People of Importance in their Day," and the enthusiasm of Rossetti who called it "the only great accomplished poem" of its period. Twentieth-century interest in mysticism, and even in the irrational, has again turned our attention to this solitary masterpiece, which has also been broadcast.

## § 2

## THOMAS GRAY

Gray was born in 1716, his mother being a milliner of Cornhill, who had, however, sufficient means to send the boy to Eton, and afterwards to Cambridge, where he became Professor of Modern History. Gray was a first-rate scholar, and indeed, there is something of the classic stamp on all his work. He wrote so little, and in the phrase of Horace, he used the file with such untiring patience, that it has been said of him that no man ever entered the company of the poets with so small a volume in his hand. Indeed, if we may take the public verdict, that volume might as well contain a single poem, and no more : "The Elegy written in a Country Churchyard" ; while, if we choose to follow Dr. Johnson, even this tiny bulk must be diminished. "Sir," said the Doctor, "there are but two good



stanzas in Gray's poetry, which are in his 'Elegy.' " He then repeated the stanza.

For who, to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,  
This pleasing anxious being ere resigned,  
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,  
Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?

He added, "the other stanza I forget."

Which was the forgotten stanza? Surely it was either

Full many a gem of purest ray serene  
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air;

or perhaps

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,  
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;  
Along the cool sequestered vale of life  
They kept the even tenor of their way.

Everybody knows how Wolfe recited the "Elegy" before the battle of Quebec and how he declared that he would rather be the author of the poem than the conqueror of the city. And the truth is that, overwrought and artificial as a large proportion of Gray's poetry appears to us to-day, we are still prepared to go a great deal further than the Doctor. To take but two examples, which may serve as types of many, "The Bard" contains those splendid lines:

Ruin seize thee, ruthless King!  
Confusion on thy banners wait;  
Though fanned by Conquest's crimson wing,  
They mock the air with idle state.

And passages of equal splendour can be found further on in the same poem, such as the well-known stanza:

Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,  
While proudly riding o'er the azure realm  
In gallant trim, the gilded vessel goes,  
Youth on the prow and Pleasure at the helm.

Nor is it quite the truth to say that all his lines are filed and chiselled, works of art and not of nature. Where can be found a touch of melody more spontaneous, sweet, and sensitive than such lines as these:

There pipes the woodlark and the song-thrush there  
Scatters his loose notes on the waste of air.

If we can hardly say that in Gray's book of verses are "infinite riches in a little room," yet it is not without its diamonds of fine water and its pearls of lasting price.

Both Thomas Gray and William Collins were rebels against the dead, trim artificialities that characterise the minor English poets who were influenced by Pope. Collins, who was born in Chichester in 1721, is best remembered as the author of the "Ode to Evening," and of an ode written to the soldiers who were killed at Fontenay and Culloden :

How sleep the brave, who sink to rest  
By all their country's wishes blest !  
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,  
Returns to deck their hallow'd mould,  
She there shall dress a sweeter sod  
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

By fairy hands their knell is rung,  
By forms unseen their dirge is sung :  
There Honour comes, a pilgrim gray,  
To bless the turf that wraps their clay  
And Freedom shall awhile repair  
To dwell a weeping hermit there !

## § 3

## JAMES THOMSON

James Thomson's "The Seasons" is not among the poems that are for all time, but Thomson has an interesting place in literary history. He lived in an artificial age, and he revolted, though not very successfully, against the stucco artificiality of which Horace Walpole was the great protagonist. Thomson wrote "The Seasons" in blank verse, reverting back to the manner of Milton—with, of course, none of his genius—and this verse is a relief to the fashionable eighteenth-century rhymed couplets. Thomson knew the country and loved it. His love never found the dainty expression that has given Herrick immortality. But it was real, and despite the occasional and probably inevitable lapses into the artificial he certainly heard "strains of the fairy world and the fairy songs." In a sense he was the forerunner of Scott and Wordsworth, though Wordsworth sneered at his "false and sentimental commonplaces."

"The Castle of Indolence," which took him fifteen years to write, is perhaps the most highly finished and poetical of his works. The following



extract will give a good idea of its style, which has much in it of Spenser's charm and sweetness :

A pleasing land of drowsyhead it was,  
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye ;  
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,  
Forever flushing round a summer sky :  
There eke the soft delights that witchingly  
Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,  
But whate'er smack'd of noyance or unrest  
Was far, far off expell'd from this delicious nest.

Thomson was a Scot. He was born in Roxburghshire in 1700, and was educated at Edinburgh University. He was intended for the Church, but after the death of his father in an attempt to lay a ghost in a haunted house, he came to London to seek his fortune as a poet. "Winter," the first part of "The Seasons," was published in 1726, and the poem was completed four years later. Thomson wrote other poems and several dramas, all of which are forgotten. Thanks to the good offices of the Prince of Wales, he was given the sinecure office of Surveyor-General of the Leeward Islands, with a salary of £300 a year, and this with his earnings as a poet enabled him to live a pleasant, modest, and rather lazy life in his house at Kew Lane, where his cellar was well stocked with Scotch ale :

The world forsaking with a calm disdain,  
Here laughed he careless in his easy seat ;  
Here quaffed encircled with the joyous train,  
Oft moralising sage : his ditty sweet.  
He loathed much to write, nor cared to repeat.

In "The Seasons" Thomson's thought, as Coleridge said, is natural—and that was a great thing in the eighteenth century—even when his style is verbose and tiresome. The following description of a summer morning is Thomson at his best :

With quickened step,  
Brown Night retires : young Day pours in apace,  
And opens all the lawny prospect wide.  
The dripping rock, the mountain's misty top,  
Swell on the sight, and brighten with the dawn.  
Blue, through the dusk, the smoking currents shine ;  
And from the bladed field the fearful hare  
Limps, awkward : while along the forest-glade  
The wild deer trip, and, often turning, gaze  
At early passenger. Music awakes  
The native voice of undissembled joy ;  
And thick around the woodland hymns arise.

## THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

Roused by the cock, the soon clad shepherd leaves  
His mossy cottage, where with Peace he dwells ;  
And from the crowded fold, in order, drives  
His flock, to taste the verdure of the morn.

James Thomson died in 1748.

### § 4

#### WILLIAM COWPER

William Cowper, who was born in 1731, has been aptly described as a link between Thomson and Wordsworth—that is, he threw off the last traces of Pope's artifice of style and the view of nature as a trim parterre. He lived the quietest of country lives ; he loved children, cats, hares, and flowers ; but, if he shared Wordsworth's passion for the lakes, the mountains, and the starry heavens, it was rather for their external beauty than for the mysterious life of things, the spirit that may be felt but not seen, which Wordsworth, in a still communion, drank into his soul. Yet many of Cowper's best-known lines have a certain grandeur in simplicity which has kept them sweet and living. Such is the splendid hymn, " God moves in a mysterious way," and the dirge on the loss of the *Royal George* :

Toll for the brave !  
The brave that are no more !  
All sunk beneath the wave,  
Fast by their native shore !

Toll for the brave !  
Brave Kempenfelt is gone ;  
His last sea-fight is fought ;  
His work of glory done.

Weigh the vessel up,  
Once dreaded by our foes !  
And mingle with our cup  
The tears that England owes.

Her timbers yet are sound,  
And she may float again,  
Full charged with England's thunder,  
And plough the distant main.

But Kempenfelt is gone,  
His victories are o'er ;  
And he and his eight hundred  
Shall plough the wave no more.



Nor can the lines on his Mother's Portrait be easily surpassed. Many of the passages, so sweet and sad and simple, are such as, having once been read, can never be forgotten.

Oh that those lips had language ! Life has passed  
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.  
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,  
The same that oft in childhood solaced me ; . . .  
I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,  
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,  
And, turning from my nursery window, drew  
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu ! . . .

"The Task," his long poem in blank verse, undertaken at the suggestion of his friend Lady Austen, is a pleasant picture of quiet domestic life ; but the six books suffer from a somewhat pedestrian, uninspired quality.

Cowper suffered from hysteria, and was for a while shut up in a private asylum. After his recovery, religion became an obsession with him and coloured the rest of his life, sometimes obviously affording him comfort, and at other times filling him with hopeless despair.

But it must not be forgotten that, although one of the most melancholy of poets, Cowper had his lighter hours. We need only call to mind "John Gilpin," and his letters to Mrs. Unwin, so full of gayest wit.

## READING LIST

See the Section on the Poets in Thomas Seccombe's *The Age of Johnson* (Bell) and also Edmund Gosse's *Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Macmillan).

There are volumes in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan) on the following : Goldsmith, Cowper, and Gray.

Excellent editions of Cowper, Crabbe, Gray, and Collins (1 vol.) ; and James Thomson are published by the Oxford University Press.

*The Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse*, edited by D. Nichol Smith (Oxford University Press).

*The Book of Georgian Verse*, edited by W. G. Braithwaite (Grant Richards) : an excellent selection, including Smart's "Song of David."

*Wm. Cowper and the Eighteenth Century*, by Gilbert Thomas (Allen & Unwin).

*The Stricken Deer*, a study of Cowper by Lord David Cecil, gives a picture of the times and the man. From the same pen in the same manner is a portrait of Gray in *Two Quiet Lives* (both books by Constable).

*George Crabbe*, by his Son (Cresset Press).

## DR. JOHNSON AND HIS CIRCLE

## § 1

IT is curious rather than obvious that we should at this day refer so naturally to the mid-eighteenth-century period of our literature as the Age of Johnson. For Dr. Johnson cannot, except in a special sense, or without explanation, be called the greatest literary man of his time. He had none of Burke's splendour of genius, none of Goldsmith's excellent lightness of touch and "legal tender" of humour; he was inferior to Gibbon in learning and staying-power; Sheridan's rapier wit and easy invention were quite beyond him; his poetry cannot be compared with Gray's, nor was his prose half so English and transparent as Wesley's. Even Boswell, his biographer, has recently outstripped him. Yet such were his personality and influence that we involuntarily give his name to his period.

Samuel Johnson was born on September 18, 1709, at Lichfield. He was the son of Michael Johnson, a bookseller of that small cathedral city. He was trained under his father to be himself a bookseller, and he could bind a book with his own hands. Probably he never attempted such a thing after he left Lichfield. In after life he preferred the risk of chemical experiments, and did not consider too narrowly whether the risk was his own or other people's. But later in his life, when visiting Lichfield, he called at the bookshop of Mr. Major Morgan, who had in some degree succeeded to old Michael Johnson's business. Taking up one of the books, he "recollected the binding to be the work of his own hands." Otherwise, Johnson was of little service to his father: he read books instead of selling them, and confessed afterwards that "to supersede the pleasures of reading by the attentions of traffic was a task he could never master."

He inherited a taint of scrofula, and in early childhood was taken to London by his mother to be touched by Queen Anne for "the king's evil." He inherited also, from his father, what he called "a vile melancholy." He began his book-learning at a dame school in Lichfield, continued it at Lichfield School, where he was taught Latin, and then at Stourbridge he spent a year as half schoolboy, half usher, miserably enough. After two years of idleness—which meant desultory reading in his father's shop—he was entered as a Commoner of Pembroke College, Oxford, the expense



being defrayed by friends of his father. In his Oxford years he was afflicted, as few young men have ever been, by "an horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience," a malady which he was never to outgrow. In 1731 he returned to Lichfield to see his father die and to face the world on his own account with unsettled aims and the sum of twenty pounds.

He began his adult career as a sort of miscellaneous journalist in Birmingham, writing for a local paper, and translating Lobo's *Voyage to Abyssinia* for a bookseller, thus absorbing the background of his allegorical tale *Rasselas*. On slender means and with a future that was all vague he married, at the age of twenty-six, a widow, Elizabeth Porter, who was twenty years his senior and was possessed of £1000. They set up a small country school. But in 1737 Johnson started for London to lead the literary life as it could then be lived.

His first employer in London was Edward Cave, the proprietor of the then young but well-established *Gentleman's Magazine*. His principal task was to report by hearsay, or from his own imagination, the principal speeches in the parliamentary debates. We hear of no raptures in his contemplation of London. On the contrary, he lost little time in writing and publishing his satire, "London," imitated from Juvenal, in which, with more than a little pose, he lashed the vices and social conditions of the town—which he was to live in and love for the rest of his days—even to the point of exclaiming :

Who would leave, unbrib'd, Hibernia's land,  
Or change the rocks of Scotland for the Strand?

He received £10 for the poem and, what was more valuable in the end, the praise of Pope. His career had begun.

Odds and ends of "Grub Street" work occupied his next years apart from his contributions to the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Miscellaneous essays and translations followed each other. But in 1744 he wrote, "at a white heat," his *Life of Richard Savage*, the wastrel poet, who had been his earliest companion in London. This will be referred to later. It did much to establish his reputation in 1744. In 1749 appeared his fine poem "The Vanity of Human Wishes." He was no longer unknown or in extreme poverty. Moreover, he was about to embark, at the suggestion of Robert Dodsley, the bookseller, on the greatest work of his life. This was his *Dictionary of the English Language*, to which we had best come at once.

After occupying a succession of lodgings in and about London, Johnson and his wife had settled in the house, No. 17 Gough Square, Fleet Street, which is now his London "shrine" and the home of the Johnson Club. Here he took off his coat, so to speak, to his great task.



Johnson did not, of course, work single-handed. He employed no fewer than six amanuenses in the long top front garret of his house. In this garret the meetings of the Johnson Club are now held. His assistants were the two Macbeans; Mr. Shiels, who afterwards helped with the *Lives of the Poets*; Mr. Stewart, a son of an Edinburgh bookseller; a Mr. Maitland; and a Mr. Peyton. Johnson's payments of twenty-three shillings a week to each of these assistants reduced his agreed remuneration of £1575 to an inconsiderable residue, and the work made the heaviest demands on his time and strength. Dr. Birkbeck Hill thinks that he had in view his own experience of big literary undertakings when, referring to Pope's slow progress in translating the *Iliad*, he wrote: "Indolence, interruption, business, and pleasure all take their turns of retardation; and every long work is lengthened by a thousand causes that can, and ten thousand that cannot, be recounted."

But the work went on. Johnson began as the makers of our own *New English Dictionary* began—by collecting quotations. Against each, in the margin, he wrote the first letter of the word under which it was to occur. His clerks transcribed all these sentences on separate slips. With these in hand he dictated his definitions, and supplied the etymologies from whatever sources were available. He had hoped to be done in three years. But the three years became seven, and we have the well-known story of Andrew Millar, the actual publisher, saying, when he received the last sheet, "Thank God, I have done with him," and Johnson's smiling comment, "I am glad that he thanks God for anything."

A fairly long list could be made of words to which, in sport or petulance, Johnson attached indefensible meanings. But some of the humours of the Dictionary were not of this class, being unconscious. Thus he defined "pastern" as "the kneec of a horse." Asked by a lady how he came to do this, he replied with admirable frankness, "Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance." Similar frankness, on another occasion, was more injurious to his interviewer. Soon after the Dictionary appeared, Garrick, being asked by Johnson what people said of it, replied that among other things it was objected that he had quoted authors whose style was beneath the dignity of such a work, as, for instance, Samuel Richardson. "Nay," said Johnson, "I have done worse than that; I have cited thee, David."

The work appeared on April 15, 1755, in two folio volumes, at the price of £4, 10s., and was received with wonder and acclamation. "I may surely," he wrote, "be contented without the praise of perfection, which if I could obtain in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave." But there was some morbid exaggeration here.

The Dictionary did not absorb all Johnson's energies between 1748 and



1755. On March 20, 1750, the first essay of his *Rambler* appeared. Following the model of Addison's *Spectator*, Johnson came forth, says Boswell, as "a majestick teacher of moral and religious wisdom." It is worth noting that just as the *Spectator* and *Tatler* had been largely inspired by the talk of the Queen Anne coffee-houses, Johnson's essays reflected in some measure the conversations he enjoyed in the Club he had founded in Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row. During just two years Johnson wrote two essays a week for publication on Tuesdays and Fridays. He invariably supplied his copy at the last moment, and he rarely read a proof; but he revised all the essays carefully for the collected edition. The success of the production was not great. As author Johnson received four guineas a week, which worked out at a guinea per thousand words; and the sales, at twopence, did not reach five hundred copies a day. But there were compensations. Mrs. Johnson said to him: "I thought very well of you before, but I did not imagine you could have written anything equal to this." Nor was self-approval wanting: Johnson said to a friend, "My other works are wine and water, but my *Rambler* is pure wine."

Of the 208 *Rambler* essays Johnson wrote all but four or five. A general idea of their subject-matter may be conveyed by giving a few typical titles. Such as:

- Folly of Anger: Misery of a Peevish Old Age.
- Various Arts of Self-Delusion.
- Advantages of Mediocrity: An Eastern Fable.
- Reasons Why Advice is Generally Ineffectual.
- A Proper Audience Necessary to a Wit.
- A Critical Examination of "Samson Agonistes."
- Cruelty of Parental Tyranny.
- Directions to Authors Attacked by Critics.
- History of a Legacy-Hunter.
- Effect of Sudden Riches upon the Manners.

Titles of essays, however, convey little; treatment is all. Johnson's style as an essayist was as heavy-handed and turgid as Steele's or Addison's was light, limpid, and resourceful. Indeed, he criticised his work in a phrase when, says Boswell, "having read over one of his *Ramblers*, Mr. Langton asked him how he liked that paper; he shook his head and answered, 'too wordy.'" The same verdict may be passed on his later *Idler* essays, though in these a livelier fancy and an easier style are sometimes visible.

Augustine Birrell has compared the march of Johnson's sentences to the measured tread of a well-drilled company of soldiers. His style is well



suited to the expression of large verdicts and sombre reflections. Take this declaration of Shakespeare's permanence :

The sand heaped by one flood is scattered by another, but the rock always continues in its place. The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabricks of other poets, passes without injury the adamant of Shakespeare.

Or the famous passage in his last *Idler* essay :

There are few things, not purely evil, of which we can say, without some emotion of uneasiness, this is the last. Those who never could agree together shed tears when mutual discontent has determined them to final separation ; of a place which has been frequently visited, though without pleasure, the last look is taken with heaviness of heart ; and the *Idler*, with all his chilliness of tranquillity, is not wholly unaffected by the thought that his last essay is before him.

The secret horror of the last is inseparable from a thinking being, whose life is limited, and to whom death is dreadful. We always make a secret comparison between a part and the whole ; the termination of any period of life reminds us that life itself has likewise its termination ; when we have done anything for the last time we involuntarily reflect that a part of the days allotted to us is past, and that as more is past there is less remaining.

Johnson's last year in Gough Square was clouded by the death of his mother, at the age of ninety. In the *Idler* (No. 41) he referred to this event in those words of sombre beauty : " The last year, the last day, must come. It has come, and is past. The life which made my own life pleasant is at an end, and the gates of death are shut upon my prospects." To relieve his heart, and to pay his mother's funeral expenses, he sat down and wrote his allegorical story on the theme " *Vanitas vanitatum*," *Rasselas*, in the evenings of a single week in the spring of 1759. He received £75 for it, and £25 for its second edition. It is constantly stated that *Rasselas* was written in Johnson's next residence, in Staple Inn, Holborn, but an examination of relevant dates in Boswell's *Life* shows that this is impossible. It is certain that *Rasselas* was written in Gough Square. There, from night to night, the princely wanderers from the happy valley in Abyssinia travelled on in their vain search for greater happiness ; there Imlac grew eloquent and Pekuah timid, the Pyramids were measured, and the Astronomer rescued from the mists of his distraught imagination ; and there Johnson penned that quiet " Conclusion, in which nothing is concluded," save only that " they deliberated a while what was to be done, and resolved, when the inundation should cease, to return to Abissinia." *Rasselas* gives us the moralisations of the *Rambler* and the *Idler* thinly connected by a story. It is now the most widely read of Johnson's prose-writings, while it has a close affinity, in mood and motive, to the best of his poems, written ten years earlier, " The Vanity of Human Wishes." A low thunder of melancholy



reflection on the transitoriness of human glory and the ironies of fate is heard in every line of this poem. A famous passage is that in which Johnson refers to the hard lot of the writer and the scholar :

Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,  
Nor think the doom of man reversed for thee :  
Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,  
And pause a while from learning, to be wise ;  
There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,  
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail.  
See nations, slowly wise, and meanly just,  
To buried merit raise the tardy bust.  
In dreams yet flatter, once again attend.  
Hear Lydiat's life, and Galileo's end.

Equally memorable is the passage in which he draws conclusions from the fate of Charles of Sweden, sunk from splendour into exile :

His fall was destined to a barren strand,  
A petty fortress, and a dubious hand ;  
He left the name at which the world grows pale,  
To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

Another literary labour begun by Johnson in Gough Square was his annotated edition of Shakespeare. He had projected it as early as 1744. It was not until 1756, when the Dictionary was off his hands, that he began his task, which continued to be a comedy of delay. He announced, so to speak, with tucked wrist-bands, that the edition would be ready by the Christmas of the following year. Subscriptions flowed in. He finished it in just nine years ! His industry had to be stoked with guineas, and the stoking was perhaps done by his publisher with too little science.

In 1777, in his last Fleet Street house, in Bolt Court, Johnson began his fine series of critical biographies, the *Lives of the Poets*, written originally to be prefaces to an edition of the English poets published by a group of booksellers in 1779-1781. The *Lives* is his best and most enduring work. It exhibits at once the narrowness of his conceptions of poetry and literature, and the force and acuteness of his understanding within its range of interests. He had little feeling for any poetry but that of his own period. But against this fact may be set Augustine Birrell's remarks : "Johnson is every bit as interesting when he is writing about Sprat, or Smith, or Fenton, as when he has got Milton or Gray in hand. He is also much less provoking. My own favourite life is that of Sir Richard Blackmore. The poorer the poet the kindlier is the treatment he receives. Johnson kept all his rough words for Shakespeare, Milton, and Gray."

The longest of the *Lives* is the best from the biographical standpoint, that



of his early friend Savage, who has already been mentioned ; and the best critical essays are those of Dryden, Pope, and Cowley. With all their faults the *Lives* abound in passages of acute discernment and vigorous common sense. The biographical parts of the work gave Johnson a great deal of trouble in the collection of facts. His information was drawn from many and varied quarters, "from books, and partly from sources which had long been closed ; from old Grub Street traditions ; from the talk of forgotten poetasters and pamphleteers who had long been lying in parish vaults." Happily he simplified his style in sympathy with his subjects.

If so many moderating judgments have to be passed on Johnson's writings it may fairly be asked, How came his vast ascendancy in the literary world of his age, and why do his name and fame persist as they do ? For it can be said, without much risk of dispute, that the three names in our literature which, above all others, have "got through" to the simplest and least literate minds in this country are those of Shakespeare, Dr. Johnson, and Charles Dickens. It may even be ventured that Dr. Johnson's name, brought into an argument in a village inn or a London cabmen's shelter, is accepted more readily than Shakespeare's. This lasting potency rests firstly on Johnson's Dictionary. For although this was not by any means the first English work of its kind, it counts as the first in the popular mind and, in a sense, it counts also as the last. To ask or doubt the meaning of a word is still, by tradition, to invite an appeal to Dr. Johnson, and since the need to define words and terms is ever recurrent, the lexicographer's name is for ever enmeshed in the inquiry. Secondly, the prowess of Johnson in talk and argument has appealed to the common mind. A fist heavily brought down on a tavern table with the name of Dr. Johnson uttered will still carry weight and secure a pause in the argument. This is the very spell which the Doctor exercised over his friends, acquaintances, and distant admirers in his lifetime. To his talk far more than to his writings, he owed the title of literary dictator, given to him by Chesterfield, and that of the Great Cham of Literature first bestowed on him, probably, by Tobias Smollett. Bacon said : "Reading maketh a full man ; conference, a ready man ; and writing, an exact man." Johnson read deeply, conferred much, and wrote in varying degrees of industry. Yet with all this equipment he might not have been the genius he was in conversation. He might never have been able to impress men and women by his talk as he did in the remotest districts of Scotland, where they fell prostrate under his spell. "He is a dungeon of wit," said Lady Lochbuy. "It is music to hear this man speak," was the verdict of Ulinish when Johnson had explained—the entire process of tanning !

The chief ingredients of his talk were wit, sense, and information ;



his secret was that he had these in overwhelming abundance and was never at a loss. Often wrong, he was never weak. If he had not been often and impressively in the right he could not have become the literary dictator of his age. He talked for victory. He did not discourse lonesomely and at large, like Coleridge. He talked because he was talked to, and his aim was to set right what he thought had been said amiss: one foe crushed, one fallacy exposed, he was ready for the next. "May there not," pleaded Boswell with him one day, "may there not, sir, be very good conversation without a contest for superiority?" Johnson replied, "No *animated* conversation, sir." Nothing but animated talk served him. Boswell once found him highly satisfied with his prowess on the preceding evening. "Well, we had a good talk." "Yes, sir," said Boswell, "you *tossed and gored* several persons."

As Mr. Birrell says, "They came to be tossed and gored. And, after all, are they much to be pitied? They have our sympathy, and the Doctor has our applause."

One's sympathies, indeed, are with old Moser, the Swiss Keeper of the Royal Academy, who so annoyed Goldsmith by exclaiming, "Stay! Stay! Doctor Shonson is going to zay zomething." The interrupter is still laughed at, yet his behaviour crystallises Johnson's extraordinary ascendancy in conversation. Men did listen to him like that.

James Boswell, to whom we owe the greatest and most entertaining biography in our literature, perhaps in any literature, survived his great master and subject, Dr. Johnson, by eleven years. Born at Auchinleck, in Ayrshire, he came of an old Scottish legal family and was himself a prospective lawyer at the Scottish Bar. But for Boswell the world was "full of a number of things," and it is difficult to conceive that he could ever have toiled to success in the law. He had a genius for being interested, and an insatiable appetite for general information and lively human intercourse. Johnson summed up a great deal of Boswell when he described him as "the best travelling companion in the world." He was enjoyable because he enjoyed, and interesting because he was interested. This is the only reasonable explanation of his extraordinary triumph as a biographer. His self-indulgence, his vanity, his often foolish candour, and his lust for notoriety do not count much against his alertness of observation, his boundless good-humour, and his enviable self-satisfaction.

Even at twenty Boswell yearned for London and important acquaintance in the literary world. It was in his second visit to London, at twenty-three, that he realised his consuming ambition to meet the Dictator. His introducer was Tom Davies, the bookseller, and the scene was the back parlour of Davies's shop in Russell Street, Covent Garden, and the date—the most memorable in Boswell's life—was May 16, 1763, when Johnson



was aged fifty-four. Boswell describes what happened with his usual frankness :

At last, on Monday the 16th of May, when I was sitting in Mr. Davies's back parlour, after having drunk tea with him and Mrs. Davies, Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop. Mr. Davies, having perceived him through the glass door in the room in which we were sitting, advancing towards us, he announced his awful approach to me, somewhat in the manner of an actor in the part of Horatio, when he addresses Hamlet on the appearance of his father's ghost, "Look, my lord, it comes."

Thenceforward, with interruptions due to Boswell's intermittent legal studies, his eccentric travels, his marriage and return to Scotland, the two were constantly together. Johnson's intimates soon observed the alliance and were inclined to resent it. "Who is this Scotch cur at Johnson's heels?" someone asked. "He is not a cur," replied Goldsmith, "he is only bur. Tom Davies flung him at Johnson in sport and he has the faculty of sticking." Johnson, it was, who forced his election to the Literary Club. It was Boswell, on the other hand, who forced Johnson by sheer cajolery and not a little plotting into his tour through Scotland and the Hebrides. Throughout Johnson thoroughly understood that he was being "boswellised" by Boswell; indeed, he encouraged him in his task.

The true merit and wonder of Boswell's great work lies in a blend of sympathy, imaginative insight, and enterprise which was peculiarly his own and which has never been equalled since.

Boswell always keeps his eye on the object, is never wandering or tedious, and his style is unaffected and clear. He fairly took charge of his subject and resolved to present it truthfully. To Hannah More, who begged him to soften his portrait, he replied, "I will not make my tiger a cat to please anybody."

After Johnson's death, in 1784, Boswell sat down to write his *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* It had a mixed reception; caricaturists and critics found plenty of material in it for their wit, Horace Walpole calling it "the story of a mountebank and his zany." But the *Tour* is of the very stuff of the *Life*. The *Life* itself appeared in May 1791, and despite much criticism became immediately popular. The first edition (of 1700 copies) was followed by a second in 1793.

In 1789 Boswell had lost his wife, and thereafter his life became more and more irregular. He died in London after a short illness, May 19, 1795.

Comparatively recent discoveries of manuscripts, notes and jottings



by Boswell, first at Fettercairn House, in Scotland, and later at Malahide Castle, have expanded our knowledge of Boswell, his circle, and his period, and have caused us to see him not only as the biographer of Johnson. This mass of material went to America, and has been edited and gradually published by American scholars. "I have a kind of strange feeling," he says in one of the notes, "as if I wished nothing to be secret that concerns myself." He really worked to that theory, as this new material indicates, and we have come to realise that we have an English Rousseau in self revelation and something of a new Pepys in his picturing of his age.

The story of the discoveries of this truly enormous mass of Boswell's writings is itself a detective romance of literature which has caught the public imagination. Their intrinsic value bids fair to exalt Boswell to a foremost place among writers of the period. The publication in 1950 of the first of these Journals under the title *Boswell in London* was a sensation. It took his story only up to the famous meeting with Johnson, told of his ambitions, his raffish life in town, his meetings with people of importance, and more especially of his inmost thoughts, his most private actions—truly "as though he wished nothing to be secret which concerns myself." It became an immediate success. The second volume in the sequence, *Boswell in Holland*, was a slight anticlimax, for the actual journal had been lost by the messenger bringing it from Holland. So the book had to be reconstructed by Prof. Frederick A. Pottle of Yale University, who with Professor C. Abbott of Britain is editing the papers. It was made up from odd scraps, notes and letters among the Boswell MSS. The two volumes of *Boswell on the Grand Tour*, followed by *Boswell in Search of a Wife* and *Boswell for the Defence*, complete this remarkable record and have established Boswell in a niche of lasting fame on his own account as well as that of biographer to Johnson.

## § 2

## OLIVER GOLDSMITH

It is time, indeed, to bring Oliver Goldsmith on the scene. He was Johnson's junior by nineteen years, and we have no precise record of their first meeting. No two men of the eighteenth century have been so familiarised to us by biographers. Goldsmith was the son of a poor Irish vicar, the Rev. Charles Goldsmith, and was born in his father's vicarage at Pallas, in the county of Longford. Two years after his birth the family removed to the village of Lissoy, in the county of Westmeath, where the vicar had obtained a more lucrative living. It is practically certain that the homely

everyday sights and some of the personalities of Lissoy were haunting him when, in 1770, he wrote his finest poem, "The Deserted Village." Its first lines are full of wistful memory :

Sweet Auburn ! loveliest village of the plain,  
Where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain ;  
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,  
And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed,  
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,  
Seats of my youth, where every sport could please ;  
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,  
Where humble happiness endeared each scene !

The portrait of the old village parson includes a very beautiful simile.

To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,  
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.  
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,  
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,  
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,  
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

But the most tender lines of all are those in which the storm-tossed man of letters in London tells of his unfulfilled dream of ending his life amid the scenes in which it had begun. And here again is another beautiful simile.

In all my wanderings round this world of care,  
In all my griefs—and God has given my share—  
I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,  
Amid these humble bowers to lay me down,  
To husband out life's taper at the close,  
And keep the flame from wasting, by repose.

And as an hare whom hounds and horns pursue,  
Pants to the place from which at first she flew,  
I still had hopes my long vexations past,  
Here to return—and die at home at last.

In 1745 Goldsmith entered Trinity College, Dublin, as a poor sizar, exposed to many humiliations. To earn a little money he wrote street ballads, for which he obtained five shillings each. In 1747 he gained an exhibition, and to celebrate his success he invited friends of both sexes to a dance in his rooms, which was violently interrupted by his outraged tutor. His college career remained stormy and unhappy, but he took his B.A. degree in 1749. Two years were spent by him at his mother's cottage at Ballymahon. Then he meditated emigration to America, but thought



better of it, and in 1752 he went to Edinburgh to study medicine, helped by funds supplied by his Uncle Contarine. His restless spirit drove him abroad in 1754, and during two years he was lost in mysterious wanderings which took him to Paris, Strasburg, Padua, Switzerland, and various parts of France, thus storing the impressions and sentiments which ten years later were to establish his fame as a poet on the publication of "The Traveller." He sent the first sketch of it home to his brother Henry, to whom he wrote the exquisite lines :

Eternal blessings crown my earliest friend,  
 And round his dwelling guardian saints attend;  
 Bless'd be that spot, where cheerful guests retire  
 To pause from toil, and trim their evening fire;  
 Bless'd that abode, where want and pain repair,  
 And every stranger finds a ready chair;  
 Bless'd be those feasts with simple plenty crown'd,  
 Where all the ruddy family around  
 Laugh at the jests or pranks that never fail,  
 Or sigh with pity at some mournful tale;  
 Or press the bashful stranger to his food,  
 And learn the luxury of doing good.

From all this wandering and reflecting—so mysteriously financed—Goldsmith returned to England, without invitation or engagement, and, practically, without a penny in his pocket. He landed at Dover on February 1, 1756, with a medical degree of which he never gave a clear account, and which was never authenticated. Not long afterwards he became an usher in a school kept by one Dr. Milner, at Peckham. That is why there is a "Goldsmith Road" in Peckham to-day. Through the Milners, however, he was introduced to Griffiths, the "bookseller" (i.e. eighteenth-century publisher) and thus to the literary world.

In 1757 he became Griffiths's tame author, living in a house in Paternoster Row, on a salary from Griffiths, and under the thumb of Mrs. Griffiths, who revised all he wrote. It was a bad time for friendless authors. As John Forster says, "the patron was gone, and the public had not come." Griffiths owned and published the *Monthly Review*, and Goldsmith did hack reviews for it. In the year mentioned he wrote that he was making shift to live by "a very little practice as a physician and a very little reputation as a poet." His first definite success was not his laborious and now unread *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* (which, however, cannot be neglected by literary annalists), but his admirably humorous and pungent "Chinese Letters" written for John Newbery's *Public Ledger* in 1760, and afterwards published in volume as *The Citizen of the World*. Following a literary vogue of the time he identified



himself with a Chinese savant, visiting London and sending to a Peking friend a series of letters containing his impressions of London and English life generally. This was a mere pose, and in reality Goldsmith wrote *The Citizen* in his own character, and in it expressed, or insinuated, his own opinions. *The Citizen of the World* can, with judicious skipping, be read to-day with delight, particularly for its delineation of such characters as Beau Tibbs and the "Man in Black."

Goldsmith's way of life had hitherto been that of the hack-writer in the garret; but now fortune began to smile on him sufficiently to warrant a change of residence. No longer a starveling garreteer, he is discovered in decent lodgings in Wine Office Court, Fleet Street. Dr. Johnson, who had certainly met him before, becomes his visitor and closer friend. And here on a memorable evening Goldsmith entertains him and Mr., afterwards Bishop, Percy. The Doctor came to Goldsmith's dressed more neatly and respectably than he was wont to be seen, and, on Percy remarking the change, said, "Why, sir, I hear that Goldsmith, who is a very great sloven, justifies his disregard of cleanliness and decency by quoting my practice; and I am desirous this night to show him a better example." Thus was inaugurated one of the finest friendships in literary history. It was cemented in 1764, when Johnson rescued his friend from the hands of bailiffs and the threat of prison. What happened was told by Johnson himself to Boswell:

I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and, as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it, and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon return; and, having gone to a bookseller, sold it for £60. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill.

It was Goldsmith's employer, John Newbery, of St. Paul's Churchyard, who bought the *Vicar*. But he did so only on Johnson's advice, and kept the manuscript two years before he published it.

In the details of its plot, *The Vicar of Wakefield* is not a great novel. Goldsmith wrote in his "Advertisement" to the book, "There are a hundred faults in this Thing," and this is true. The beauty of the book lies in its incidental comedy, and in its exquisite touches of simple human nature. It touched the hearts of English, German, and French readers



equally. The sophisticated Goethe loved it as a statement of those things which "redeem men from all the errors of life."

Goldsmith's genius for light and natural comedy is equally shown in his plays, *The Good-Natured Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer*. The scene, in the latter, in which the squire drills his men-servants in proper behaviour before they wait on his guests at dinner, is one of the best in British comedy.

In the last five or six years of his life Goldsmith was not poor, though neither was he rich. He was a greatly loved member of the famous Literary Club founded by Johnson. He died in his Temple chambers in Back Court on April 9, 1774. When the news came to Sir Joshua Reynolds he put aside his brush for the day. Edmund Burke burst into tears. To-day Goldsmith's gravestone in the Temple, which marks only approximately the place of his burial, is visited by lovers of his character and genius.

## § 3

## EDMUND BURKE

Intellectually Burke was the greatest man in the Johnson Circle. He is vividly figured for us by Boswell and others. Edmund Burke was essentially a political thinker who used literature to embellish his speeches and writings. His early work, the *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, is now little read, but Lord Morley points out its enduring merit: "It was a vigorous enlargement of the principle, which Addison had not long before timidly illustrated, that critics of art seek its principles in the wrong place, so long as they limit their search to poems, pictures, engravings, statues, and buildings, instead of first arranging the sentiments and faculties in man to which art makes its appeal."

Lord Morley, too, affirms that three of Burke's publications, the *Speech on American Taxation*, the *Speech on Conciliation with America*, and the *Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol*, form "the most perfect manual in our literature, or in any literature, for one who approaches the study of public affairs."

Burke's writings stretch the reader's mind, as his talk stretched Johnson's. His prose is one of the richest literary fabrics in the language, abounding in brilliant analysis and noble imagery. "It was Burke's peculiarity and his glory," says Augustine Birrell, "to apply the imagination of a poet to the first order of the facts and the business of life. Arnold says of Sophocles, 'He saw life steadily, and saw it whole.' Substitute for the word 'life' the words 'organised society,' and you get a peep into Burke's mind. There was a catholicity about his gaze. He knew how the whole world lived. . . . Wordsworth has been called the High Priest of Nature. Burke may be called the High Priest of Order—a lover of settled ways, of justice,



peace, and security. His writings are a storehouse of wisdom, not the cheap shrewdness of the mere man of the world, but the noble animating wisdom of one who has the poet's heart as well as the statesman's brain." The work in which these qualities of Burke can be most profitably and enjoyably studied by the general reader is of course his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, that great plea for order and continuity in human government, and for justice and sympathy between nations and citizens. The following vision of Marie Antoinette illustrates the splendours of prose to which Burke rose with ease.

It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles ; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in, glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour, and joy. Oh ! what a revolution ! and what a heart must I have to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall ! Little did I dream when she added titles and veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom ; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour, and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded ; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise, is gone ! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.

Many other members of what may be called the Johnson Circle—Samuel Richardson, Sheridan, Gibbon, and others—are dealt with in other and more appropriate chapters. It should be remembered Johnson linked himself to the history of English fiction not only by his admiration of Richardson, who, he said, "enlarged the knowledge of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue," but by his later fatherly encouragement of Fanny Burney (afterwards Madame d'Arblay), the first really notable English woman novelist. Her *Evelina*, published in 1778, was an instant success. Dr. Johnson declared that passages in it were worthy of Richardson ; and Burke, Gibbon, Reynolds, and Sheridan swelled the applause. Fanny Burney never quite repeated this success, though her novel, *Cecilia* (1782), can be read to-day with delight. Saintsbury thus characterises her four novels : "*Evelina*, delectable ; *Cecilia*,



admirable ; *Camilla*, estimable ; *The Wanderer*, impossible." Her *Diary and Letters* are wonderfully vivacious records of the court of George III, and of the literary society which she enjoyed. They form a great contribution to our knowledge of her period, which extended to the first three years of the Victorian age.

### READING LIST

Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets*, 2 vols., in the World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, G. Birbeck Hills, monumental edition (Oxford University Press, 6 vols.), and there are, of course, numerous cheap editions, e.g. Dent's Everyman's Library, 2 vols.

Sir Leslie Stephen's *Johnson* in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan) ; J. Bailey's *Dr. Johnson and his Circle*, in The Home University Library.

JAMES BOSWELL : *Journal of a Tour in the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson* (Dent's Everyman's Library).

*Boswell in London, 1762. Boswell in Holland, 1763-1764. Boswell on the Grand Tour, Vol. 1, 1764, and Vol. 2, 1765-1766. Boswell in Search of a Wife, 1766-1769. Boswell for the Defence, 1769-1774.* Edited by Frederick A. Pottle (Heinemann). The fruits of the recent discovery of Boswell's journals.

*Boswell's Column.* Contributions to *London Magazine* (Kimber).

*The Vicar of Wakefield*, by Oliver Goldsmith, and Goldsmith's *Poems and Plays*, 1 vol., in Dent's Everyman's Library.

William Black's *Goldsmith*, in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

Stephen Gwynn's *Oliver Goldsmith* (Eyre & Spottiswoode).

*Burke's Writings and Speeches*, 6 vols. (Oxford University Press).

*Reflections on the French Revolution*, etc., in Dent's Everyman's Library.

Viscount Morley's *Burke* in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

A. M. Osborn, *Rousseau and Burke* (Oxford University Press).

*Evelina*, by Fanny Burney, in Dent's Everyman's Library.

The historical and sociological background is luminously drawn in A. S. Turberville, *Johnson's England* (Oxford University Press).

For the literature of the period, see T. Seccombe, *The Age of Johnson* (Bell), and Oliver Elton, *Survey of English Literature : 1730-1780* (Arnold).

## XXI

EDWARD GIBBON AND OTHER EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY  
PROSE-WRITERS

## § I

## GIBBON

IT does not come within our province to trace here the development of historical writings. Such writing came early into existence and has continued through the ages. For English readers, four historians are of greater importance than all others—Gibbon, Macaulay, Carlyle, and Froude, and we might add John Richard Green.

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century the first remarkable development in the writing of history in England showed itself. David Hume was both philosopher and historian, but neither his philosophy nor his history can be dealt with in this OUTLINE OF LITERATURE. Taking all things into account, many of us would be prepared to agree with Frederic Harrison that Gibbon is the supreme historian of all lands and ages. Yet that would not prevent our also concurring with Lord Acton that Macaulay is the greatest of all writers of History. Nor would this verdict preclude us from asserting that, for sheer beauty and ease of style, Froude remains unequalled. Finally, we would gladly acknowledge that in historical intuition, and in the power of delineating character by a phrase, no man since Tacitus has ever rivalled Thomas Carlyle.

Edward Gibbon was born in 1737 at Putney. His school and college career gave little promise of the eminence to which he was to attain. After a few years profitably employed in acquiring a grounding in the classical languages at Westminster School, he proceeded, at the then not unusual age of fifteen, to Magdalen College, Oxford. There he spent what he himself, in his interesting *Autobiography*, calls "fourteen unprofitable months." It was the dark age of the old Universities; and Gibbon seems to have received not the slightest assistance or encouragement in his studies from the tutors of the place. But he read voraciously. Soon he gave up his Anglican creed, and after remaining for some time undecided between Mohammed and the Pope, eventually made his choice in favour of the Roman Church. These religious vagaries of his youthful son so alarmed



the elder Gibbon that he decided to break short his University career, and to send him into exile at the home of an amiable and cultured Swiss pastor at Lausanne.

This proved to be the turning-point in the historian's life ; for during some of the most formative years he was thrown among French influences, just when those influences were most powerful. It was the age of the Encyclopædia, of Diderot, Condorcet, Voltaire, and Rousseau. Of these two last Rousseau had been born at Geneva ; and the rugged peaks at which Gibbon gazed across the lake looked down upon the waters of Annecy, where the Frenchman's genius began to unfold itself. Voltaire had retired to his castle at Ferney, within easy distance of Lausanne. From these facts two things resulted—Gibbon was converted from Catholicism, not to Anglicanism, but to scepticism, and he became really more French than English.

While at Lausanne, for the only time in his life, he fell in love. The object of his affections was a Swiss girl called Suzanne Curchod. But the Fates were not propitious. His father was again alarmed, and sent stringent injunctions to his son to abandon the courtship.

We should, perhaps, think more highly of Gibbon had he persisted ; but he did not. To quote his own words, he "sighed as a lover and obeyed as a son." Suzanne, some time later, became the wife of Necker—the able financier who strove to save France from bankruptcy in 1789—and the mother of the famous Madame de Staël.

## § 2

*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is probably the greatest history of all time. It was as he sat among the ruins of the Capitol in 1765, watching the sun going down over the Eternal City, that Gibbon conceived the colossal and magnificent scheme of narrating the history of the decay of the power of Rome, beginning with the great age of the Antonines, and ending with the capture of Constantinople by the Turks. Fourteen centuries were comprised in the vast panorama, among them some of the most vital epochs in the history of the world. He had to deal in turn with the decline of the Roman State, the rise and triumph of Christianity, the founding of the Byzantine Empire, the victories of Mohammedanism, the religious and political differences and cleavages of the Middle Ages, the rise of national states in the West, and the great duel between the Empire and the encroaching Turks in the East. Here was labour for a veritable Hercules—to examine and digest all the extant authorities ; afterwards to select the material from the immaterial ; then finally to tell the whole



long story, making each personage and every fact fall into its proper place so as to give unity and perspective to the whole. This most difficult task Gibbon triumphantly accomplished. Scholarship has made immense strides since his day, yet it is surprising how seldom he is caught in any serious error. The literary effect is superb. The work rises before us like a majestic Greek temple, firmly built upon a rock, strong, symmetrical, and beautiful.

The elements which went to make the *Decline and Fall* what it is, as Augustine Birrell has said, are "the noble conception, the shaping intellect, the mastered learning, the stately diction, and the daily toil." In the same essay Birrell says: "To praise Gibbon is not wholly superfluous; to commend his history would be so. It is now well on its second century. Time has not told upon it. It stands unaltered and with its authority unimpaired. It would be invidious to name the histories it has seen born and die. Its shortcomings have been pointed out—it is well; its inequalities exposed—that is fair; its style criticised—that is just. But it is still read. 'Whatever else is read,' says Edward Freeman, 'Gibbon must be.'"

Gibbon lived in an age of criticism, cold, sceptical, questioning. He shared the prevailing point of view to the full. His magnificent intellect sheds the most dazzling light; but it never warms. He traverses the ages with the firm tread of one who is complete master of his material; but also with the sneer of the cynic, to whom the greatest men appear grotesquely small, and to whom the great movements that have swayed the hearts of nations appear to have been built largely upon delusions.

The weapon which Gibbon uses most frequently and successfully is irony. He lived in an age when it was still dangerous to cast doubt upon the miraculous element in the propagation of Christianity in the first three centuries. But what could not be done openly could be insinuated ironically. Indeed, wherever Gibbon has to deal with ecclesiastical affairs, an over-indulgence in this mocking tone mars the effect of the writing.

He belittled Christianity in particular. "The tone he thought fit to adopt towards Christianity," says Birrell, "was, quite apart from all particular considerations, a mistaken one. No man is big enough to speak slightingly of the construction his fellow-men have from time to time put upon the Infinite. And conduct which in a philosopher is ill-judged, is in an historian ridiculous. Gibbon's sneers could not alter the fact that his History, which he elected to style the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, might equally well, as Dean Stanley has observed, have been called the 'Rise and Progress of the Christian Church.' . . . We have Cardinal Newman's authority for the assertion that Gibbon is the only Church historian worthy of the name who has written in English."

Gibbon's style falls short of the very highest. He is always dignified;



but, at his worst, he is affected and pompous. His diction, though less satirised than that of his friend Dr. Johnson, is far less pure than that of Goldsmith or of Burke. He is not an author from whom it is easy to quote short passages ; the following sentences give some slight idea of the stately flow of his narrative :

The martial and ambitious spirit of Trajan formed a very singular contrast with the moderation of his successor. The restless activity of Hadrian was not less remarkable when compared with the gentle repose of Antoninus Pius. The life of the former was almost a perpetual journey ; and as he possessed the various talents of the soldier, the statesman, and the scholar, he gratified his curiosity in the discharge of his duty. Careless of the differences of season and of climates, he marched on foot, and bareheaded, over the snows of Caledonia, and in the sultry plains of the Upper Egypt ; nor was there a province of the empire which, in the course of his reign, was not honoured with the presence of the monarch.

The following description of Mohammed is from the *Decline and Fall* :

According to the tradition of his companions, Mahomet was distinguished by the beauty of his person—an outward gift which is seldom despised, except by those to whom it has been refused. Before he spoke, the orator engaged on his side the affections of a public or private audience. They applauded his commanding presence, his majestic aspect, his piercing eye, his gracious smile, his flowing beard, his countenance that painted every sensation of the soul, and his gestures that enforced each expression of the tongue. In the familiar offices of life he scrupulously adhered to the grave and ceremonious politeness of his country : his respectful attention to the rich and powerful was dignified by his condescension and affability to the poorest citizens of Mecca : the frankness of his manner concealed the artifice of his views ; and the habits of courtesy were imputed to personal friendship or universal benevolence. His memory was capacious and retentive, his wit easy and social, his imagination sublime, his judgment clear, rapid, and decisive. He possessed the courage both of thought and action ; and although his designs might gradually expand with his success, the first idea which he entertained of his divine mission bears the stamp of an original and superior genius.

The son of Abdallah was educated in the bosom of the noblest race, in the use of the purest dialect of Arabia ; and the fluency of his speech was corrected and enhanced by the practice of discreet and seasonable silence. With these powers of eloquence, Mahomet was an illiterate barbarian ; his youth had never been instructed in the arts of reading and writing ; the common ignorance exempted him from shame or reproach, but he was reduced to a narrow circle of existence, and deprived of those faithful mirrors which reflect to our mind the minds of sages and heroes. Yet the book of nature and of man was open to his view ; and some fancy has been indulged in the political and philosophical observations which are ascribed to the Arabian traveller. He compares the nations and religions of the earth ; discovers the weakness of the Persian and Roman monarchies ; beholds with pity and indignation the degeneracy of the times ; and resolves to unite, under one God and one king, the invincible spirit and



primitive virtues of the Arabs. Our more accurate inquiry will suggest, that instead of visiting the courts, the camps, the temples of the east, the two journeys of Mahomet into Syria were confined to the fairs of Bostra and Damascus ; that he was only thirteen years of age when he accompanied the caravan of his uncle, and that his duty compelled him to return as soon as he had disposed of the merchandise of Cadijah. In these hasty and superficial excursions, the eyes of genius might discern some objects invisible to his grosser companions ; some seeds of knowledge might be cast upon a fruitful soil ; but his ignorance of the Syriac language must have checked his curiosity, and I cannot perceive in the life or writings of Mahomet that his prospect was far extended beyond the limits of the Arabian world. From every region of that solitary world, the pilgrims of Mecca were annually assembled, by the calls of devotion and commerce ; in the free concourse of multitudes, a simple citizen, in his native tongue, might study the political state and character of the tribes, the theory and practice of the Jews and Christians. Some useful strangers might be tempted or forced to implore the rites of hospitality ; and the enemies of Mahomet have named the Jew, the Persian, and the Syrian monk, whom they accuse of lending their secret aid to the composition of the Koran. Conversation enriches the understanding, but solitude is the school of genius ; and the uniformity of a work denotes the hand of a single artist. From his earliest youth Mahomet was addicted to religious contemplation : each year, during the month of Ramadan, he withdrew from the world and from the arms of Cadijah : in the cave of Hera, three miles from Mecca, he consulted the spirit of fraud or enthusiasm, whose abode is not in the heavens but in the mind of the prophet. The faith which, under the name of Islam, he preached to his family and nation, is compounded of an eternal truth and a necessary fiction—that there is only one God, and that Mahomet is the apostle of God.

“ His effect,” as Saintsbury expresses it, “ lies mainly in a peculiar roll of sentence, conducted throughout with a wavelike movement, and ending with a sound so arranged as to echo over the interval of sense and breath till the next is well on its way.”

From the literary standpoint Gibbon's interesting *Autobiography* is the most important of his writings, but it has been completely overshadowed by the seven massive volumes of the *Decline and Fall*, the first volume of which appeared in 1776 and the last in 1788. He died suddenly in London on January 16, 1794.

Gibbon was a man of a calm and cool temperament. He was vain and affected in his manners, but a brilliant conversationalist. “ It has been wittily said of him that he came at last to believe that he was the Roman Empire, or, at all events, something equally majestic and imposing.”

As Gibbon represents the detached and dignified scepticism of the eighteenth century, so Horace Walpole is the supreme English example of its artificiality and its joy in the things that do not matter. Horace Walpole's letters are one of the most illuminative documents of the century. Lord Chesterfield's famous letters to his son are also a revelation of the



mind of his time, as are, to a lesser extent, the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

Among other notable prose-writers of the period are David Hume, the historian, Adam Smith, the economist and author of *Wealth of Nations*, and Jeremy Bentham, the political philosopher, who, in what was eminently an age of reason, carried on the great English philosophical tradition derived from Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke.

### § 3

No contrast could be more striking than that between Izaak Walton and the next of the great English country writers, Gilbert White. Born in the village of Selborne in Hampshire, in 1720, it was not until sixty-eight years later that he published the little book which was to make his birth-place famous. Socially and culturally, Gilbert White typified the educated Englishman of the eighteenth century. He was a fellow of his college, and settled down, unmarried, to the duties of a country clergyman in his native place. When he began, in 1767, to write his *Natural History of Selborne*, in the form of personal letters to a naturalist of his acquaintance, he had not the slightest idea of its ever appearing in printed form. To this, undoubtedly, much of the quiet charm of the book is due; for no book of equal repute can compete with it in unaffectedness and unforced simplicity of manner.

It is the very first book to present the facts of natural history, free from the Latin and the pedantry, to say nothing of the legendary traditions, with which all previous writings on the subject had been loaded. It is completely free from unicorns of every kind; the birds and animals with which it deals being as homely and familiar as was the author. The *Natural History of Selborne* has none of the passion which infuses all the work of Richard Jefferies or of the philosophising which marks the work of Thoreau. Nor has it much of the poetry or romance so characteristic of Walton's *Compleat Angler*. Placid, serene, scholarly, and leisurely, it is definitely a pedestrian book, yet one with a dignified step. One is not at all surprised to learn that its author might often be observed on his walks taking a cloth from his pocket and flicking the dust from his boots. This note of particularity runs through the whole volume. It is observation and reflection that lends interest and charm to the whole of this celebrated book.

### § 4

There is one other writer who, by the mystery attending his person probably as much as by his literary efforts, has attracted considerable attention.

In the columns of the *Public Advertiser* from January 21, 1769, to January 21, 1772, there appeared a series of open letters, violently attacking the King and the Government of the Duke of Grafton, which live in literary history as the *Letters of Junius*. The identity of the writer was for many years a matter of speculation, and, among other people, they were attributed to Burke, Chatham, Wilkes, Chesterfield, Horne Tooke, Horace Walpole, and Gibbon. There is, however, no reasonable doubt that they were the work of Sir Philip Francis, a freakish politician, who fought a duel in India with Warren Hastings, was concerned in a notorious divorce action, and supported Wilberforce in his crusade against the slave trade. Junius was a superficial politician, but the vividness and vehemence of his invective make it almost comparable to Swift's, and there is no other political writing in English literature after his time that has the same forcefulness, except the famous *Runnymede Letters*, written by Disraeli.

The characteristics of the *Junius Letters* have been summed up by Professor Saintsbury. "An affectation of exaggerated moral indignation, claptrap rhetorical interrogations, the use, clever enough if it were not so constant, of balanced antitheses, a very good ear for some, though by no means many, cadences and rhythms, some ingenuity in trope and metaphor, and a cunning adaptation of that trick of specialising with proper names with which Lord Macaulay has surfeited readers for the last half-century—these, though by no means all, are the chief features of the Junian method."

The following extract from a letter addressed to the Duke of Grafton with its insinuated attack on George III is characteristic of the method and the style of Junius :

With any other prince, the shameful desertion of him in the midst of that distress, which you alone had created, in the very crisis of danger, when he fancied he saw the throne already surrounded by men of virtue and abilities, would have outweighed the memory of your former services. But his Majesty is full of justice, and understands the doctrine of compensations ; he remembers with gratitude how soon you had accommodated your morals to the necessities of his service, how cheerfully you had abandoned the engagements of private friendship, and renounced the most solemn professions to the public. The sacrifice of Lord Chatham was not lost on him. Even the cowardice and perfidy of deserting him may have done you no disservice in his esteem. The instance was painful, but the principle might please.

Sir Philip Francis died in 1818.



## READING LIST

Two notable books to be consulted are Edmund Gosse's *A History of Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Macmillan) and Oliver Elton's *Survey of English Literature : 1730-1780* (Arnold).

GIBBON : *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, edited by J. B. Bury, 7 vols. (Methuen) ; Everyman's Edition, 6 vols. (Dent) ; World's Classics (Oxford University Press) (7 vols.).

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HORACE WALPOLE : A selection of Walpole's *Letters* is published in Everyman's Library (Dent).

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THOMAS HOBBS : *The Leviathan* (Dent's Everyman's Library).

JOHN LOCKE : *Philosophical Works*, 2 vols., in Bohn's Library (Bell).

*Essay on the Human Understanding* (Routledge).

GILBERT WHITE OF SELBORNE : *Natural History of Selborne* (Dent's Everyman's Library).

*Life of Samuel Johnson*, 2 vols., Everyman's Library (Dent).

"JUNIUS" : *Letters*, 1 vol. (Routledge).

## XXII

### ROBERT BURNS

#### § I

#### ROBERT BURNS

THERE is, in the tiny village of Alloway, about two miles from the town of Ayr, a two-roomed cottage, in which, on the 25th of January, 1759, Robert Burns was born. Local scepticism as to the authentic "clay biggin'" having survived so long has never been seriously regarded by the poet's biographers, and this humble dwelling, preserving, no doubt somewhat artfully, every feature of the peasant domesticity of eighteenth-century Scotland, is a national shrine which for several generations has attracted not only fervent Scots but notable visitors from many and far-distant parts of the world.

The poet's father, William Burnes or Burness (for so alternately he spelled his name) had been a labouring gardener near Edinburgh, and came to Ayrshire as gardener and overseer to a gentleman of small estate on the banks of the Doon. He leased, from another proprietor, a few acres of his own, and married Agnes Brown, who, though she had no education in the conventional sense of the term, was a woman of bright intelligence, with that oral culture in tale, tradition, and poetry not uncommon in the country women of her period. From his mother, it is generally assumed, Robert Burns, the eldest of a family of seven, took his temperament, his fancy, and imagination. He was, in features, philosophy, and character, a very different type of man from his father, who, however, had a marked and admirable individuality of his own.

Of professional teaching, Robert Burns, in truth, had but a limited and erratic experience. His father and a few neighbouring householders engaged between them for two years a young itinerant teacher for the tuition of their children, and on this excellent dominie's removal elsewhere the father taught the boy at home. A precocious passion for reading was evoked; Pope's works and a collection of letters by the best prose-writers of Queen Anne's time set young Burns assiduously scribbling at the age of twelve. At thirteen he went for a few weeks to a school in Dalrymple to improve his penmanship; at fourteen a like brief period was spent with his first tutor, in Ayr, in the study of English, French (which in course



of time he could read with some facility), and Latin, in which he never got beyond the rudiments. At seventeen he attended a school at Kirkoswald for the study of mensuration, and the few months spent there completed all the orthodox education he was ever to have.

Its spasmodic character was unavoidably due to the straitened circumstances of the Burnes family. Ill-fortune attended every effort of William Burnes to improve his social condition; having left the Alloway cottage and croft to lease, in succession, the farms of Mount Oliphant and Lochlea, he failed with both, and in 1784 died of consumption.

Anticipating the failure with Lochlea, Robert and his brother Gilbert, three months before their father's death, took the farm of Mossgiel, which was stocked with the individual savings of the whole family, who wrought upon its cold and grudging acres for four years, during which the two brothers allowed themselves each only £7 per annum of wages.

If Mossgiel gave a wretched return to husbandry, it was fertile enough in poetry. Burns was now twenty-five years of age. For ten years, in his hours of remission from hard manual labour on his father's holdings, he had read widely and wisely. He had shone in the rustic debates of young men's "mutual improvement" societies, had been shedding his native shyness and gaucherie at masonic gatherings and village dances; had gained self-assurance from manifold opportunities for pitting his native wit and logic against the academic dogmas of many social superiors. From early manhood he had manifestly been an idealist and a sentimentalist, acutely responsive to feminine charms, and his first verses were a tribute at fifteen years of age to a girl whose singing in the harvest field had enraptured him. A second platonic charmer, when he was but seventeen, had "overset his trigonometry and sent him off from his studies at a tangent." At twenty-two he was more genuinely in love with Alison Begbie, a servant-maid on a neighbouring farm; wrote three poems to her, proposed to marry her, and was rejected.

The heroine of "Sweet Afton" is supposed to have been Mary Campbell, the poet's "Highland Mary."

Flow gently, sweet Afton ! among thy green braes ;  
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise ;  
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,  
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock-dove whose echo resounds thro' the glen,  
Ye wild whistling blackbirds, in yon thorny den,  
Thou green-crested lapwing, thy screaming forbear ;  
I charge you, disturb not my slumbering Fair.

To the untimely death of Mary Campbell we owe his "Address to Mary in Heaven," written on the third anniversary of her death. The

poet's wife noticed that towards the darkening he grew sad and wandered into the barnyard, "where his Jean found him lying on some straw with his eyes fixed on a shining star. Immediately on entering the house he sat down and wrote the lines, 'To Mary in Heaven,' and gave them to his wife."

Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,  
That lov'st to greet the early morn,  
Again thou usher'st in the day  
My Mary from my soul was torn.  
O Mary ! dear departed shade !  
Where is thy place of blissful rest ?  
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid ?  
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?

That sacred hour can I forget,  
Can I forget the hallow'd grove,  
Where, by the winding Ayr, we met,  
To live one day of parting love !  
Eternity can not efface  
Those records dear of transports past,  
Thy image at our last embrace,  
Ah ! little thought we 'twas our last !

The well-known plaintive song, "The Banks o' Doon," was suggested by an unhappy love-affair which, however, was not one of the poet's own.

Ye banks and braes o' bonie Doon,  
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair ?  
How can ye chant, ye little birds,  
And I sae weary, fu' o' care ?  
Thou'lt break my heart, thou warbling bird,  
That wantons thro' the flowering thorn :  
Thou mindst me o' departed joys,  
Departed never to return.

Aft hae I rov'd by bonie Doon,  
To see the rose and woodbine twine ;  
And ilka bird sang o' its Luve,  
And fondly sae did I o' mine ;  
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,  
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree !  
And my fause Luvver staw my rose,  
But ah ! he left the thorn wi' me.

His local renown, however, began with no love-lyrics, naturally not for general circulation, but with satirical onslaughts upon the Calvinistic bigotry which at the time, not in Ayrshire only, but all over Scotland,



denied to the faithful the very elements of culture and intellectual freedom, and set the country half-mad with polemical controversies.

"The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light," wrote Burns in after years, "was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them dramatis personæ in my 'Holy Fair.'" This was "The Holy Tulzie" or "Twa Herds," a daring enough intrusion on the sacred precincts of the Kirk, but being purely personal in its application it was not as irritant in its effect as the satire which followed—"Holy Willie's Prayer"—in which, while one real man alone was pilloried, he was obviously portrayed, in all his pietistic hypocrisy, as typical of a class which too often ruled the Kirk Sessions. The dovescots of the Kirk were ruffled even more by "The Holy Fair" which followed—a Teniers-like depiction of unseemly features attending the rustic festival to which the annual celebration of the Lord's Supper had, in certain parishes, degenerated.

Lockhart, in his incomparably fine *Life of Burns*, would seem to deplore the ruthless irreverence with which the poet dealt with those ugly aspects of life among the orthodox about him. But Lockhart was a son of the manse, to that extent prejudiced against its criticism, and not yet far enough removed from the period of which Burns wrote to recognise, as Scotland universally does to-day, that the poet in truth was doing the Christian Church, though rudely, a cleansing service.

Burns, essentially, was a man of religious temperament, which does not always imply perfect Christian practice. Atheism, and a materialistic conception of the universe, seem never to have entered into his mind; and piety manifest in humility and tenderness, in upright walk and earnest conversation, in the Covenanters' martyrdom, or the devotion of family worship, in him found always chords responsive. "That the same man should have produced 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' and the 'Holy Fair' about the same time will ever continue to move wonder and regret," says Lockhart, whose assurance on this point looks curiously ill-founded to-day.

It was, without question, an unorthodox and fairly free-living section of the Ayrshire bourgeoisie which most applauded these early satires of the poet, and included the closest of his friends. It was probably as the mordant critic of the "unco' guid" they understood him best, and laid the foundation of his renown; other aspects of Burns could only have appeared to them, if at all with approval, when he published his first book.

## § 2

In 1786, when he was twenty-seven years of age, convinced that Mossgiel could at its best give only a meagre substance to so large a family, Burns

decided to abandon the plough and try his fortune in the West Indies, where many of his countrymen were plantation managers. A post was secured for him, but he had not sufficient money to pay his passage to Jamaica, and to secure this he set about publishing his first book from the press of a Kilmarnock printer. Three hundred subscribers were got, and an edition of six hundred copies was printed and sold at three shillings. Copies of this Kilmarnock edition have, in recent times, sold at remarkable prices : in one case at least at £1000. Burns from the entire sales made about £20, with which he was by no means ill-satisfied.

In this Kilmarnock edition, almost every literary faculty of the poet was manifest ; had it never had a successor it would have been sufficient to secure his permanent reputation in Scotland as a real bardic singer in the authentic national tradition. It was unmistakably a work of genius, of extraordinary technical accomplishment, and brilliant enough to warrant all the applause it met with. There was in it not only far more vital human stuff than in any Scottish poet who had gone before him, but a fresh spirit peculiarly acceptable to his times.

There was much of a journalist in Burns's composition (indeed, he was once offered a journalistic post in London !), and his lighter verse, like much of Byron and Pope, was topical, for its appeal depending on the whims, events, and passions of the hour.

What charmed his compatriots most in the Kilmarnock edition, there is no question, was its outspokenness, which spared no social sham, no political injustice, derided the pompous "elected person," proclaimed the dignity of the humblest kind of labour, shot thunderbolts of sly invective and idealism across a landscape sombre with superstitions social and ecclesiastic.

Is there for honest Poverty  
That hings his head, an' a' that ;  
The coward slave—we pass him by,  
We dare be poor for a' that !  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
Our toils obscure an' a' that,  
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,  
The Man's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,  
Wear hoddin grey, an' a' that ;  
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,  
A Man's a Man for a' that :  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
Their tinsel show, an' a' that ;  
The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,  
Is king o' men for a' that.



There are but a few lyrics in the Kilmarnock edition, and these are far from his best in that field—the bulk of the book is made up of fearlessly heterodox lampoons, bacchic poems on Scots drink, pawky and witty rhymed epistles to his friends wherein all his young, wild, gallant philosophy of life came out in terms deliciously frank and native—the confidences of a fine fellow in a warm expansive hour; thoughts humane and tender of sheep, and mice, and old mares and daisies.

The wider fame of the poet was established instantly by this collection of his verse, most of it written in a few winter months in Mossgiel; he was no longer singer of a parish, but Caledonian Bard. There were in it poems which in their vein, for spontaneity, gusto, and sheer native inspiration, he was never to surpass—"The Twa Dogs," "Address to the Deil," "Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie," "The Auld Farmer's Salutation to his Auld Mare Maggie," "Scotch Drink," "To a Mouse," "To a Mountain Daisy."

Wee modest, crimson-tipped flow'r,  
 Thou'st met me in an evil hour;  
 For I maun crush amang the stoure  
   Thy slender stem:  
 To spare thee now is past my pow'r,  
   Thou bonie gem.

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield,  
 High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield;  
 But thou, beneath the randon bield  
   O' clod or stane,  
 Adorns the histie stibble field,  
   Unseen, alane.

"Hallowe'en" was the happiest and most observant and humorous description of old superstitious revels.

Not all of Burns's finished manuscripts figured in the Kilmarnock edition; it was apparently a judicious and representative selection from a much larger body of accomplished verse already executed, and left out, for example, the "Cantata" called "The Jolly Beggars," that "puissant and splendid production," as Matthew Arnold called it, wherein old gangrel life and character, studied in a Mauchline tavern, found expression in a sequence of songs, dramatic, humorous, descriptive, all composed in moments of true lyrical elation.

The success of the Kilmarnock edition put an end to the poet's project of emigration. For the preparation of a new edition (his Kilmarnock publisher would not risk a second), he was induced to go to Edinburgh, where his fame had preceded him. For six months he lodged in the Scottish

capital in very humble quarters with an old Ayrshire friend, and found himself the lion of a season in a society then really metropolitan, comprising a genuine aristocracy of lineage and intellect. A robust figure, 5ft. 10 in. in height, with a slight stoop, due doubtless to years of toil in the plough-stilts ; dark-haired, with keen black glowing eyes such as Walter Scott declared he had never seen in any other person ; his conversation free, unaffected, ever interesting ; his dress "midway between the holiday costume of a farmer and that of the company with which he now associated"—Burns got Edinburgh's complete approval.

An association of the most distinguished members of the northern aristocracy—the Caledonian Hunt—handsomely subscribed to his second edition, which brought him about four hundred pounds.

It may be surmised, however, that for Edinburgh his *éclat* was that of the rustic prodigy, with little conception that his name and fame would long outlive those of the most notable men who patronised him. No serious attempt was made by anyone in the literary and fashionable coteries to rescue this young man of rare and obvious genius from a condition of life so incongruous with his gifts and his accomplishments. He returned to Mossgiel and Jean Armour, who had borne him twins some months before, and whom in the following year he married—a partner from whom till the day of his death he doubtless got more domestic happiness than he could have got from Mrs. Macle hose, the Edinburgh grass-widow, to whose "Clarinda" he played "Sylvander" in a correspondence which, in its style and insincerity, showed that the influence of the epistolary art of the period of Queen Anne was anything but salutary.

It was during the honeymoon that Burns wrote "Of a' the Airts the Wind can Blaw," out of compliment to his wife :

Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,  
I dearly like the west,  
For there the bonie lassie lives,  
The lassie I lo'e best :  
There wild-woods grow, and rivers row,  
And mony a hill between :  
But day and night my fancy's flight  
Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,  
I see her sweet and fair :  
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,  
I hear her charm the air :  
There's not a bonie flower that springs,  
By fountain, shaw, or green ;  
There's not a bonie bird that sings,  
But minds me o' my Jean.

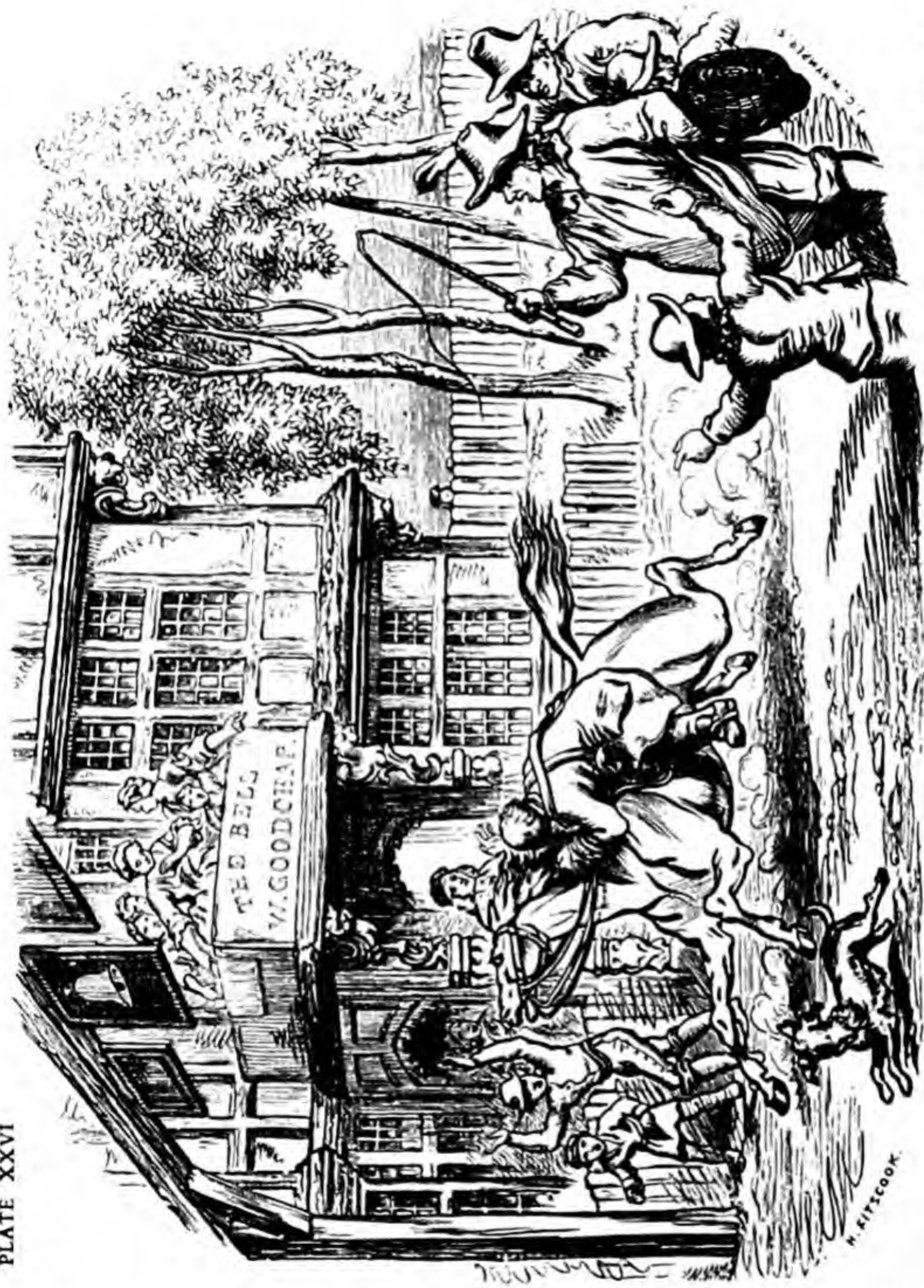




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"ROBINSON CRUSOE EXPLAINING THE SCRIPTURES TO FRIDAY," BY A. FRASER



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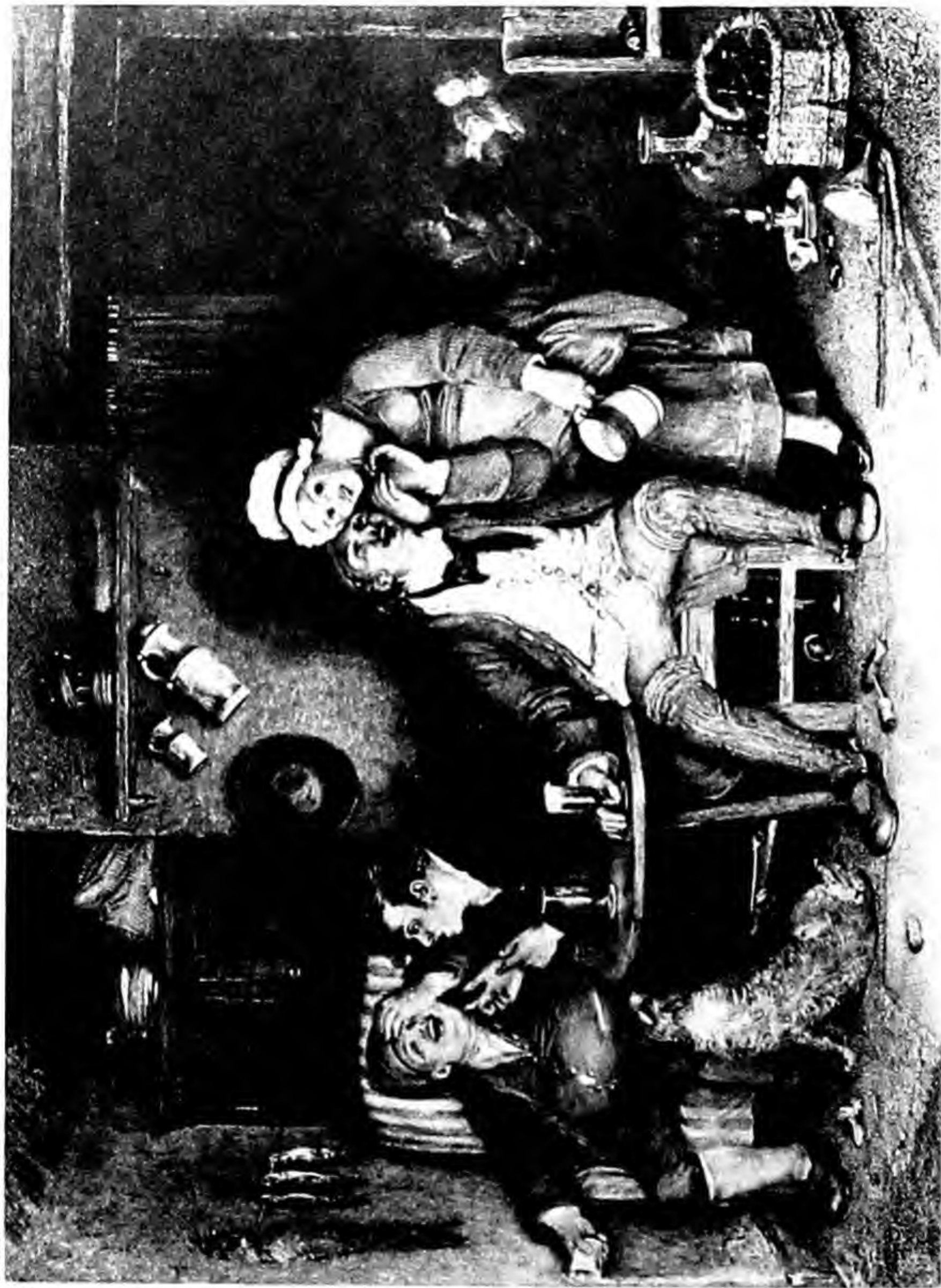




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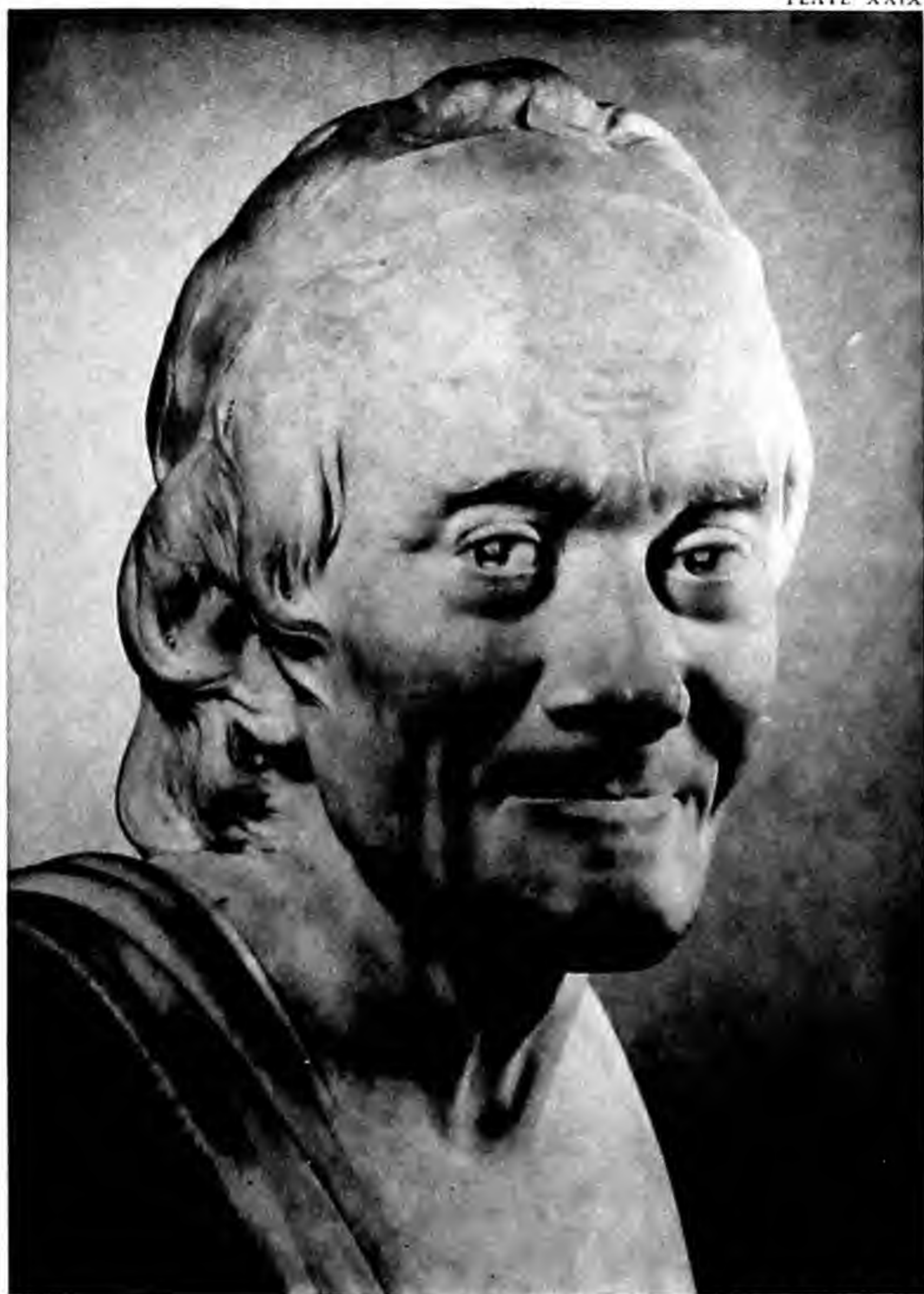
"JOHNSON, GOLDSMITH AND BOSWELL AT THE MITRE TAVERN," BY EYRE CROWE, A.R.A.

The Mitre Tavern, Johnson's favourite resort, no longer exists. It was on the south side of Fleet Street.



"TAM O' SHANTER," AFTER THE PICTURE BY JOHN BURNET





*Reproduced by courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum*

### VOLTAIRE

The French sculptor, Jean-Antoine Houdon, has left us a number of portraits of the great satirist. Most impressive is the seated statue which is in the foyer of the theatre of the Comedie Française in Paris ; but he also made several versions of this well-known bust. One of these has been acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington. It catches wonderfully the cynical shrewdness and some of the bitterness of the writer.



W. F. Mansell

"ROUGET DE L'ISLE SINGING THE MARSEILLAISE," AFTER A PAINTING BY PILS,  
IN THE LOUVRE, PARIS





*Picture Post Library*

"FAUST AND MEPHISTOPHELES," BY JACOMIN



*W. F. Mansell*

TELL'S FLIGHT

From a frieze in Tell's Chapel

The scene illustrates William Tell escaping during a storm from the boat in which he was being conveyed as a prisoner by Gessler.



With his Jean he took a farm at Ellisland in Dumfriesshire, on the banks of the Nith, delightfully situated—but a poet's selection rather than a shrewd farmer's. Here, among many other poems, which augmented his fame, he composed his famous "Tam o' Shanter," wherein are concentrated all the best natural qualities of his verse. It was first published in Edinburgh periodicals in 1791; after the Edinburgh second edition, indeed, Burns seemed content to disseminate his poems, or let his friends first print them, through such commercially unprofitable channels, or to send them gratis to compilers of song miscellanies. He regarded "Tam o' Shanter" as his best work, an estimate with which most discerning critics have agreed. It was written while he was still a farmer, though eking out his livelihood in the service of King George as a probationary "gauger" or exciseman. In 1791 he gave up his farm, became wholly an exciseman for a salary of £70 a year, and took up residence in Dumfries.

Dumfries itself was a town of taverns, and meridian drams, and rude *noctes ambrosianæ*, and Burns too readily fell into its dissipated habits. There is every reason to believe, however, that his disrepute on this account has been considerably exaggerated; his work was always carefully and conscientiously done to the satisfaction of his superiors; there was no suggestion of domestic unhappiness, and his correspondence up till his latter days betrays no evidence of a mind distracted from a decent man's ideals and duties.

Burns died on July 21, 1796 as the result of rheumatic fever, just when an excise collectorship was in sight for him and "a life of literary leisure with a decent competence." He was only thirty-seven years of age. He had not long enough survived to see more than a mere fraction of his poetry in collected form, and after his "crowded hour of glorious life" in Edinburgh, there had been little beyond the encouragement of a few private correspondents to help his confidence in the permanent value of his work. The full extent of his achievement was far from being comprehended by his countrymen, though his death created a genuine sentiment of national bereavement. He had, on his death-bed, playfully requested that the "awkward squad" of his Volunteer Company should not fire over his grave; incongruous military pomp attended his funeral, but the "awkward squad" whose blundering he could not anticipate was first manifest in his earliest biographers, Currie and Walker, who were influenced by every scrap of malicious gossip they could find regarding him.

## § 3

When the poems and songs of Burns in their entirety, and a considerable body of his correspondence, were published after his death, the

extraordinary nature of the man and the full scope of his poetical genius were for the first time manifest to the world. No English poet of his century questioned his claim to rank among the greatest of lyric singers, and Goethe pronounced him first of lyrists in virtue of the two hundred and fifty songs which he wrote or rescued from rags, squalor, and indecency to adorn and transfigure.

This generous acceptance of the genius of Burns far beyond his own country was the more remarkable since understanding and appreciation must, in such cases, inevitably have been hampered by the Scots vernacular in which all the best of his work was written. That he could write impeccable and stylish English both in verse and prose is amply demonstrated, but he was unquestionably happiest and at his best in his native language, whose use by him confirmed its magic power, as in the old Border Ballads (for which he cared so little), to evoke visions and emotions not so readily responsive to well-worn, too familiar English.

He was in the true line of descent, as a poet, from Barbour and Dunbar and the old Scots "makars" generally; yet his moods of emulation were roused by poets more modern—Fergusson and Ramsay, and many others much less well-known to fame. His favourite metrical measure was the *rime couée* of old Alexander Scott's "Complaint Aganis Cupid," revived by Sir Robert Sempill in "Habbie Simpson"; it is the stave of many of his poems, including the prophetic "Daisy."

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,  
That fate is thine—no distant date;  
Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives, clate,  
Full on thy bloom,  
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,  
Shall be thy doom!

The same responsiveness to ancient Scots metrical airs is seen in his partiality for the refrain form of

Nae treasures, nor pleasures  
Could make us happy lang;  
The heart aye's the part aye  
That makes us right or wrang—

a measure whereof Alexander Montgomerie is supposed to have been inventor in the sixteenth century in "The Bankis of Helicon" and "The Cherry and the Slac."

He was no Puritan; yet "though coarse he was never vulgar," as Byron put it, and, called upon by Thomson to provide songs for parlour audiences, he cleansed rude old ditties; sometimes in no more than a phrase or couplet found "the soul of good in all things evil," and re-created



lyrics that express the purest love, the loftiest ecstasy. Yet unquestionably the best of his songs owe nothing to earlier models. Among these should be classified "Mary Morison":

O Mary, at thy window be,  
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour !  
Those smiles and glances let me see,  
That makes the miser's treasure poor !

How blythely wad I bide the stoure,  
A weary slave frae sun to sun ;  
Could I the rich reward secure,  
The lovely Mary Morison.

or,

O my luvie is like a red, red rose  
That's newly sprung in June ;  
O my luvie is like the melodie  
That's sweetly played in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,  
So deep in luvie am I ;  
And I will luvie thee still, my dear,  
Till a' the seas gang dry.

or,

Ae fond kiss and then we sever ;  
Ae fareweel, alas, for ever !  
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,  
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.

Had we never loved sae kindly,  
Had we never loved sae blindly,  
Never met—or never parted,  
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

In Burns's immediate predecessors, the old ballad atmosphere of romance was negligible or wholly absent, in spite of their preoccupation with Prince Charlie and the Jacobites. He, too, was Jacobite, when the wind of sentiment lay in that direction, though a man more unlikely to approve of the Stuarts as they actually were would be hard to find. Romance is best inspired, not by the contemplation of dynasties or heroic figures, but by conception of the mystic grandeur of simple acts and simple words and gestures in the great cruces of life. To these was the genius of Burns ever responsive, as in—

It was a' for our rightfu' king,  
We left fair Scotland's strand ;  
It was a' for our rightfu' king,  
We e'er saw Irish land, my dear,  
We e'er saw Irish land.

## THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

Now a' is done that men can do,  
And a' is done in vain ;  
My love and native land, fareweel !  
For I maun cross the main, my dear ;  
For I maun cross the main.

He turned him right, and round about,  
Upon the Irish shore,  
And gae his bridle-reins a shake,  
With Adieu for evermore, my dear ;  
With Adieu for evermore !

The lyric cry of such verse transcends mere incidents in history, and, without any associated historical ideas to help out its significance, finds its way to the human heart. So, too, one may be indifferent to the fate of a sheep-stealer, yet experience the same proud human solace as in Henley's "Captain of My Soul" in "Macpherson's Farewell" ;

Farewell, ye dungeons dark and strong,  
The wretch's destinie !  
Macpherson's time will not be long  
On yonder gallows-tree.

Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,  
Sae dauntingly gaed he ;  
He play'd a spring, and danc'd it round  
Below the gallows-tree.

O what is death but parting breath ?  
On mony a bloody plain  
I've dar'd his face, and in this place  
I scorn him yet again.

Passionate love of country ; genuine sympathy with all animate things ; emotional response to nature in every mood and aspect ; revolt against anciently accepted bonds—religious, social, and political ; fearless independence ; a clairvoyant sense of all that is implied in racial sentiment ; unaffected and masterly use of the vernacular speech, and the power to combine the loftiest reflections with true wit and humour—these are the qualities in Burns that put him first among all creative artists in the hearts of Scottish people. He is a nation's poet in the most rigid sense, *hors concours*, and without any prospect of a successor. No Scotsman—even in the Gaelic highlands, for which Burns never wrote—can escape coming under his influence even to-day, when the vulgarity of the music-halls comes quickly to the remotest glens. The Ayrshire poet did not fulfil the magnificent promise of that first Kilmarnock book, but in his later



phase as songster he produced undying lyrics that took the heart of the world by storm.

We may fitly conclude this short survey by quoting a tribute from Carlyle's famous essay :

"If we take into account the immense variety of his subjects ; how, from the loud flowing revel in ' Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut,' to the still, rapt enthusiasm of sadness of ' Mary in Heaven ' ; from the glad kind greeting of ' Auld Lang Syne,' or the comic archness of ' Duncan Gray,' to the fire-eyed fury of ' Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,' he has found a tone and words for every mood of man's heart,—it will seem a small praise if we rank him as the first of all our Song-writers ; for we know not where to find one worthy of being second to him. . . .

"His Songs are already part of the mother-tongue, not of Scotland only, but of Britain, and of the millions that in all ends of the earth speak a British language. In hut and hall, as the heart unfolds itself in many-coloured joy and woe of existence, the *name*, the *voice* of that joy and that woe, is the name and voice which Burns has given them. Strictly speaking, perhaps no British man has so deeply affected the thoughts and feelings of so many men, as this solitary and altogether private individual, with means apparently the humblest."

## § 4

## JAMES HOGG

James Hogg, "the Ettrick Shepherd," mainly owes his place among the poets of his country as the author of "The Queen's Wake." The greater part of his work, however, is of second or third merit. Hogg was first a shepherd and then a sheep farmer among the hills of Ettrick and Yarrow.

The following note in Hogg's *Autobiography* is interesting. He had just heard of the death of Robert Burns : "Every day I pondered on the genius and fate of Burns. I wept, and always thought with myself—what is to hinder me from succeeding Burns ? I, too, was born on the 25th of January, and I have much more time to read and compose than any ploughman could have, and can sing more old songs than ever ploughman could in the world. But then I wept again because I could not write. However, I resolved to be a poet, and to follow in the steps of Burns. . . ."

Hogg's association with Sir Walter Scott in collecting material for the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* spurred him to ; imitation of the old work, and it seems more than likely that he put matter of his own into the *Minstrelsy*.

His school education was of a meagre kind ; indeed, Hogg has said that although he composed with ease he found the actual writing out of

his composition a difficult task, as he had forgotten the little of the art of writing that he had ever learned. He practised writing, however, on the hillside, scratching the letters on large slate stones. Quite his best work is "Kilmeny," the Thirteenth Bard's song from *The Queen's Wake*.

Bonnie Kilmeny gaed up the glen ;  
But it wasna to meet Duncraig's men,  
Nor the rosy monk of the isle to see,  
For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be.  
It was only to hear the yorlin sing,  
And pu' the cress-flower round the spring,  
The scarlet hypp and the hind-berrye,  
And the nut that hung frae the hazel tree ;  
For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be.  
But lang may her minny look o'er the wa' ;  
And lang may she seek i' the greenwood shaw ;  
Lang the laird o' Duncraig blame,  
And lang, lang greet or Kilmeny come hame !

This story of the fairy-captured Kilmeny is sheer magic. Hogg was a lyrical poet of fine grain. Everyone knows his "Skylark" :

Bird of the wilderness,  
Blithesome and cumberless,  
Sweet be thy matin o'er moorland and lea !  
Emblem of happiness,  
Blest is thy dwelling-place  
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee !

Wild is thy lay and loud,  
Far in the downy cloud,  
Love gives it energy, love gave it birth.  
Where, on thy dewy wing,  
Where art thou journeying ?  
Thy lay is in heaven, thy love is on earth.

O'er fell and fountain sheen,  
O'er moor and mountain green,  
O'er the red streamer that heralds the day,  
Over the cloudlet dim,  
Over the rainbow's rim,  
Musical cherub, soar, singing, away !

"To the Comet of 1811" is less familiar :

Oh, on thy rapid prow to glide !  
To sail the boundless skies with thee,  
And plough the twinkling stars aside,  
Like foam-bells on a tranquil sea !



To brush the embers from the sun,  
The icicles from off the pole,  
Then far to other systems run,  
Where other moons and planets roll !

Several of Hogg's songs of a national character maintain a great popularity, such as "Cam' ye by Athol," "Flora Macdonald's Farewell," and "Come o'er the Stream, Charlie." Hogg died in 1835 and was buried in Ettrick Churchyard, where rest his shepherd ancestors.

Several other of the minor poets of the period belonged to the countryside and so were outside the main stream, but were important in this dawn of true nature poetry. Such, preëminently, was George Crabbe of Aldeburgh (1754-1832). In *The Village* he gave a realistic picture of rural England. "Nature's sternest painter, yet her best," Byron called him, and though this praise is exaggerated this verse-novelist of the peasantry was a pioneer of realism in an age of the artificial pastoral. Twenty years after *The Village* he published *The Borough*, a poem in twenty-four parts ; and after further long silences, *Tales* and *Tales of the Hall*. Benjamin Britten's opera, *Peter Grimes*, based on one of the characters in *The Borough*, has drawn fresh attention to this fine poet and story-teller. The work of Robert Bloomfield (1768-1823) and John Clare (1793-1864) must also be mentioned. Both were, like Crabbe, portrayers of the rural scene and the peasantry. Both struggled desperately to establish themselves as authors, and so escape the poverty of the country ; both died insane. Clare, whose work has been edited by Edmund Blunden, is the better poet. William Barnes (1801-1886), the dialect poet of Dorset, with his passion for English unaffected by classical words or forms, survives for his quaintness, and for a certain lyricism and a truth to his country types.

## READING LIST

### ROBERT BURNS :

There are numerous good editions of Burns's Poems, especially dependable being that in the Oxford Poets (Oxford University Press). For a critical study of Robert Burns, Carlyle's Essay may be mentioned. A good biographical study is *Robert Burns*, by J. de L. Ferguson (Oxford University Press).

### JAMES HOGG :

*The Poems of James Hogg*, edited by W. Wallace (Pitman).

For both of these men, see also Oliver Elton's *Survey of English Literature : 1780-1830* (Arnold).

## THE LITERATURE THAT MADE THE REVOLUTION

## § 1

## VOLTAIRE

GENERALLY, it may be said that during the long reign of Louis XV, who had all his great-grandfather's vices, and none of his qualities of dignity and statesmanship, France was miserably misgoverned and over-taxed. There was no justice for the poor, no freedom of speech, no efficiency in administration; the nobility had lost its interest in letters, to a large extent the Church had abandoned its divine mission; the armies were starved, with the consequence that the victories of the seventeenth century were followed by constant defeats in the eighteenth. It was in this atmosphere that the literature of revolt sprang into being. It began with Montesquieu, whose *Lettres Persanes* are a series of gay, light-hearted correspondence supposed to be written by Persian travellers in Paris, wittily describing the corruption of French life, and making serious suggestions for more satisfactory government.

Voltaire was five years younger than Montesquieu. His real name was François Arouet, and he was born in Paris in 1694. His father was a well-to-do notary, and he was educated by the Jesuits. His schooldays were tempestuous. One of his early exploits was to write a poem in which Moses was denounced as an impostor. He quarrelled with his father, and was introduced by his godfather into the dissipated society of Paris during the years that the Duke of Orleans was regent for Louis XV.

Voltaire began his literary career by writing satirical verses which landed him in the Bastille in 1716. He was imprisoned for a year. During the next six years he travelled over half Europe, and in 1725 he was again in the Bastille, this time for challenging an obscure but influential duke with whom he had quarrelled. After another six months in prison Voltaire was ordered to leave Paris, and he landed in England in the middle of May 1726. Before this visit to England, which had a vital effect on his future work, Voltaire had written poetry which is nowadays never read, and melodramas that had nothing more than a topical value.

Eighteenth-century France regarded Voltaire's epic, the *Henriade*, as



comparable to the achievements of Homer and Virgil ; but Professor Saintsbury has well described it as " declamatory in tone, tedious in action, and commonplace in character." In England Voltaire met the Walpoles, Bolingbroke, Congreve, and Pope. He studied English life minutely. In his letters to France he described the manners of the Quakers, and the new inoculation against disease. He learned to read English easily, and he not only read Shakespeare, Dryden, and Swift, but he also studied Newton and Locke, the philosophic founder of democracy. He was immensely impressed with the freedom of thought that existed in England, and with the respect paid to men of letters.

Voltaire stayed in England for three years. Lord Morley has said : " He left France a poet, he returned to it a sage." His English letters were published soon after his return to Paris. His incidental criticisms of the established order in France and his contempt for orthodoxy caused a warrant to be issued for his arrest. This time he took refuge in Lorraine, where he spent most of his time until 1740, busy writing drama and poetry. In this year he had his first interview with Frederick the Great of Prussia, with whom he had already had a long correspondence. Five years later Voltaire began another short residence in Paris. Madame de Pompadour had become his friend, and through her influence he obtained the position of historiographer-royal, with a salary of two thousand livres a year. Louis XV, however, who was no fool, was never deceived by Voltaire's mock homage, and his court favour was short-lived.

In 1751 Voltaire left Paris to make his famous stay with Frederick of Prussia in Berlin. Frederick, one of the most unpleasant monarchs in history, delighted in attracting literary men to Potsdam, but their lot there was not a happy one. As Macaulay said : " The poorest author of that time in London sleeping on a bulk, dining in a cellar, with a cravat of paper, and a skewer for a fork, was a happier man than any of the literary inmates of Frederick's court."

Voltaire was now fifty-seven. Great as was his reputation in his own country, he was unhappy and dissatisfied that his dramas were not considered equal to those of Corneille and Racine. In Berlin he believed he would find fuller appreciation. His reception was regal, but the friendship between the most powerful monarch in Europe and the greatest wit did not last very long. Frederick was frugal, Voltaire was greedy ; Frederick was arrogant, so was the Frenchman. On one occasion the king sent Voltaire some of his verses, asking him for corrections and criticism. " See," said Voltaire, " what a quantity of his dirty linen the king has sent me to wash."

Finally Voltaire fled from Prussia and settled in the Château Ferney, near Lake Geneva, which became his permanent home until the end of



his life. He lived to be eighty-four. The most considerable of his writings during the latter part of his life was his famous novel *Candide*, in which, in the form of a diary of travel, Voltaire exposes the "sins and savagery of the times" with a sustained irony unmatched in literature, and with what A. B. Walkley has called an "impish glee."

Lytton Strachey says of Voltaire: "He was the most egotistical of mortals, and the most disinterested; he was graspingly avaricious, and profusely generous; he was treacherous, mischievous, frivolous, and mean; yet he was a firm friend and a true benefactor, profoundly serious and inspired by the noblest enthusiasms."

Considering Voltaire as a writer, Lord Morley says: "Voltaire was a stupendous power, not only because his expression was incomparably lucid, or even because his sight was exquisitely keen and clear, but because he saw many new things, after which the spirits of others were unconsciously groping and dumbly yearning."

Voltaire is regarded in France as the most French of all their men of letters. His style is the French ideal of writing, clear yet coloured, strong and simple, always with the wittiest and lightest touch, yet rising with a noble subject into noble heights. To this style of his, forever modulating, every kind of literature came alike—histories, stories, letters, satires, epigrams. Above all, it lent itself to that supreme power of raillery which gained for him the name of the Great Mock—raillery against the things he hated—priests, kings, tyrants, and oppressors; against the enemies of the things he fought for—God, love, pity, liberty of thought and action, the right of every man to call his soul his own. It may be remarked that Voltaire, who is often called an atheist, passed his life in fighting the atheistic doctrines of most of his contemporaries, and that he built a church with the inscription "Dedicated by Voltaire to God." "No other church," he remarked, "is dedicated to God, but to the Saints. I prefer to serve the Master rather than the valets."

Voltaire may be called, with some propriety, the Swift of France. Like Swift, he mocked and railed; as with Swift, the vast bulk of his themes were but of passing interest and are now left unread; like Swift, his most enduring works are satires in the form of stories. *Gulliver's Travels* have their counterpart in *Candide* and *Zadig*. And it is probable that these will continue to be read, if but as masterpieces of story-telling, as long as the two languages endure.

In the slightest trifles of Voltaire, in writing or in conversation, his style comes flashing forth. The bust of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre was pronounced a speaking likeness. "Not speaking," said Voltaire, "or it would have said something silly." "I wish the Germans," he remarked on another occasion, "more wit and fewer consonants." He made the



prettiest compliments and wrote the prettiest drawing-room verses of any poet of his time. Here is an example :

Last night in sleep I seemed a king,  
A crown of gold was mine,  
And mine a more delightful thing—  
I loved a maid divine ;  
A maid, my darling, like to thee ;  
And lo, when sleep had flown  
The best of these he left to me—  
I only lost my throne !

This same light touch which he displayed in trifles comes out in his more serious work. One or two examples will suffice as well as many to convey an idea of the style which has given Voltaire his unique place in the world of letters.

In rescuing his lady, Semire, from a troop of brigands, Zadig received an arrow near the eye. The wound was deep, an abscess formed, and the eye itself was threatened. Messengers were despatched to Memphis to fetch the celebrated doctor Hermes, who arrived in due course with a train of servants. He paid a visit to the wounded man, and pronounced that he would lose his eye ; he even predicted the exact day and hour when the sad event would happen. "If it had been the right eye," he declared, "I could have saved it ; but wounds in the left eye are incurable." All Babylon, while they pitied Zadig, were filled with admiration of the doctor's wisdom. Two days later, the abscess broke of its own accord, and Zadig was as well as ever. The learned doctor wrote a book to prove that he had no business to recover and ought to have lost his eye.

Here is a passage which not only shows Voltaire as a story-teller at his best, but reveals the fact that he was a Sherlock Holmes born before his time.

One day when Zadig was walking near a little wood he saw the Queen's chief attendants and several officers running towards him. He noticed that they were in great anxiety, for they ran about as if they were quite bewildered, looking for something of great value which they had lost. When they came up to him the chief Eunuch said : "Have you seen the Queen's pet dog ?"

Zadig replied, "Is it a little female dog ?"

"You are right," said the Eunuch.

"It is a very small spaniel," added Zadig ; "she has recently had puppies, she has a limp of the left forefoot, and she has very long ears."

"You have seen her, then ?" exclaimed the Eunuch joyfully.

"No," replied Zadig, "I have never seen her. I did not know that the Queen had such a dog."

Precisely at the same time, by an extraordinary coincidence, the most beautiful horse in the King's stable had escaped from the hands of the stable attendants and galloped out on the plains of Babylon. The Grand Vizier and all the other officers ran after it with as much anxiety as the first Eunuch after the spaniel.

The Grand Vizier addressed himself to Zadig, and asked him if he had seen the King's horse pass. Zadig replied, "It is a horse which gallops to perfection; it is five feet high, with very small hoofs. It has a tail three and a half feet long; the bit of its bridle is of twenty-three-carat gold; its shoes are of silver."

"What road has it taken? Where is it?" demanded the Vizier.

"I have never seen it," replied Zadig, "and I have never heard it spoken of."

The Grand Vizier and the first Eunuch had no doubt that Zadig had stolen the King's horse and the Queen's dog. They had him conveyed before the Great Desterhan, who condemned him to the knout and to pass the rest of his days in Siberia. The judgment had scarcely been pronounced when the horse and the dog were found. The judges were under the sad necessity of reversing their judgment, but they condemned Zadig to pay four hundred ounces of gold for having said that he had never seen what he had seen. He was first obliged to pay this fine; after which he was permitted to plead his cause before the council of the Great Desterhan. He spoke in these terms:

"This is what happened to me. I was walking towards the little wood, where I lately encountered the venerable Eunuch and the most illustrious Grand Vizier. I had seen on the sand the traces of an animal, and I had easily judged that they were those of a little dog. The light and the long furrows imprinted on the little eminences of the sand between the traces of the feet showed me that it was a female that had lately given birth to pups. Other traces which appeared to have continually raised the surface of the sand by the side of the front feet told me that she had long ears. As I remarked that the sand was always less crushed by one foot than by the three others, I understood that the dog of our august Queen was, if I may dare say so, a little lame.

"With regard to the King's horse, you must know that while I was walking in the roads of this wood I perceived the marks of the hoofs of a horse. They were all at equal distances. 'Here,' said I, 'is a horse which gallops perfectly.' The dust of the trees in a narrow route only seven feet broad was brushed off here and there, to right and left, at three and half feet from the middle of the road. 'This horse,' I added, 'has a tail of three and half feet long, which, by its movements right and left, has scattered the dust.' I had seen under the trees, which formed a canopy five feet high, newly fallen leaves from the branches, and I knew that this horse had touched them, and therefore it was five feet high. As to the bridle, it must be of twenty-three-carat gold, for it had rubbed its bit against a stone, and I had made the assay of it. I judged, finally, by the marks which its shoes had left on the pebbles of another kind, that it was shod with silver of a fineness of twelve deniers."

Perhaps, as time goes on, the Great Mocker will become more and more regarded as the Great Amuser.

## § 2

## DIDEROT AND THE ENCYCLOPÆDISTS

The new ideas, the new knowledge, the whole spirit of revolt against misgovernment and superstition, found expression in the pages of the



famous *Encyclopædia*, the first volume of which was published in Paris in 1751 and the final volume in 1772. This great enterprise owed its existence to the energy and courage of Denis Diderot, who was born in 1713. Like Voltaire, he was educated by the Jesuits, and his varied literary life as playwright, novelist, and philosopher is second only in interest and importance to the careers of Voltaire and Rousseau.

The *Encyclopædia*, with which Diderot's name will always be connected, sprang from a publisher's suggestion that Diderot should prepare a French edition of Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopædia*. But it expanded far beyond such limits. It covers the whole area of human thought and activity, emphasising the triumphs of Science and, to quote Lord Morley, asserting "the democratic doctrine that it is the common people in the nation whose lot ought to be the main concern of the nation's government." Diderot was assisted by a host of distinguished collaborators, the best-known of whom were Buffon, the famous naturalist, and Voltaire. As to the manner in which this gigantic scheme was carried out, a letter of Voltaire's to Diderot is of peculiar interest: "Your work is a kind of tower of Babel: things that are good, bad, true, false, grave, and gay, are all jumbled up together. There are articles which seem written by a drawing-room dandy, others by a scullion in the kitchen. The reader is carried from the boldest flight of thought to platitudes that turn him sick."

The *Encyclopædia* naturally gave offence to the upholders of the old order, and the later volumes had to be produced clandestinely, and in constant fear of police interference, and at the end Diderot suffered the mortification of having all his proofs mutilated without his knowledge by a timorous printer.

The *Encyclopædia* was a great success, but Diderot's earnings from it averaged only a hundred and twenty pounds a year for twenty years. He was an apostle of knowledge. His disbelief in revealed religion was as thorough as Voltaire's and much more thorough than Rousseau's. He thought that the world could be saved by knowledge and virtue. He translated *Clarissa* into French, and he was largely responsible for the popularity of Richardson's novels in France in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Apart from the *Encyclopædia*, *Le Neveu de Rameau* is Diderot's greatest achievement. It is a satire on contemporary manners, written with abounding wit and a sort of bitter pity. Goethe translated it into German in 1805. Diderot was a critic both of the theatre and of pictures. Writing of his art criticism, Madame Necker, mother of Madame de Staël, said: "Before Diderot, I had never seen anything in pictures except dull and lifeless colours; it was his imagination that gave them relief and life, and it is almost a new sense for which I am indebted to his genius."



He was a man of considerable literary activity, a rapid and careless writer, with independent and unconventional points of view. There has seldom been an author, says Saintsbury, who was more fertile in ideas. "It is impossible to name a subject which Diderot has not treated, and hardly possible to name one on which he has not said striking and memorable things."

Although Diderot believed in little, he hoped for much; although he was oppressed by the present, he had confidence in the future. He had something of the Rabelais optimism and joy in life.

In 1784, five years before the Revolution, *The Marriage of Figaro* by Pierre Augustin Caron, better known as Beaumarchais, was produced at the Théâtre Français. Beaumarchais was the son of a watchmaker, a happy-go-lucky literary adventurer, who made frequent visits to Spain and England, and played a considerable part in exciting French enthusiasm for American independence, incidentally making money through the transport of Lafayette's army to the United States. He lived until 1799, spending some of his later years in exile as a suspected traitor to the new French Republic. Years before the production of *The Marriage of Figaro*, Beaumarchais had won considerable fame as the author of *The Barber of Seville*, of which *Figaro* was the sequel. *The Marriage of Figaro* has a definite place in the literature that prepared the Revolution—Napoleon described it as "the Revolution in action."

## § 3

## JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose *Social Contract* has been described as the Bible of the Revolution, was born of Protestant parents at Geneva in 1712. Here we are concerned with Rousseau, as with Voltaire and Diderot, as a writer rather than as a philosopher, but since the value of literature depends on its relation to life the books that have vastly affected human history retain outstanding interest, particularly when the circumstances of the lives of the men who wrote them are as strange and arresting as the social atmosphere in which they were produced.

Rousseau is Voltaire's one rival. Voltaire belonged to the professional class and from his youth lived in the world of manners and breeding. Rousseau was the son of a watchmaker, and spent years of his early manhood as a vagabond, and had an infinitely greater personal knowledge of the human sufferings and limitations that finally brought down the Bourbon monarchy than Voltaire ever had. Voltaire, as Lord Morley said, stood for eighteenth-century "curiosity, irreverence, intrepidity, vivaciousness, and



rationality." He was the high priest of knowledge and art. Voltaire was a rationalist, Rousseau was a sentimentalist, dreading knowledge, and believing that if man was to be happy he must not press forward but journey backward to primitive simplicity.

Never did a great writer live such a strange life as Jean-Jacques Rousseau—as Carlyle called him, "virtuous Jean-Jacques, evangelist of the Contrat Social." He was first apprenticed to a notary, and then to an engraver. When he was sixteen he wandered away from home, professed conversion to the Roman Catholic faith, and became for a while a footman in Turin. Three years afterwards he settled down for a time, as "domestic lover" to the wealthy Madame de Warens at Annecy. Madame de Warens was a "kind of deist with a theory of libertinism tempered by good nature," who, among other things, paid for Rousseau to complete his education. Rousseau was a restless and ungracious lover, often wandering away from his benefactress, on one occasion attaching himself as secretary to a Greek archimandrite, on another teaching music, of which he knew very little, to a young lady. In 1741 Rousseau was in Paris endeavouring to persuade the Academy of Science to adopt a new system of musical notation which he had invented. Then he went to Venice as secretary to the French Ambassador, returning to Paris in 1745, associating with the literary group that centred round Diderot, and contributing to the *Encyclopædia*.

In 1749, when he was thirty-seven years old, he made his first literary success with an essay in which he developed his famous theory of the superiority of the savage over the civilised man. The essay was followed by the production of two plays, the success of which brought him a command to go to court—and this command he characteristically disobeyed. He went back to Geneva in 1754, and once there confessed himself a Protestant. Two years afterwards he was again in Paris writing *La Nouvelle Héloïse*—a sentimental novel clearly suggested by Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe*—and incidentally quarrelling with Diderot. Rousseau had a genius for quarrelling. Soon after his break with Diderot he published a pamphlet attacking Voltaire. For ten years Rousseau lived in prosperity in the neighbourhood of Paris, and during this period, besides *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, his writings included the famous *Social Contract*, and his second novel *Émile*, which brought on his head the anger both of the court and of the Church. He was obliged hurriedly to leave France, going first to Switzerland and afterwards to Prussia, in neither of which countries was he made welcome. In 1766 he landed in England at the invitation of David Hume, Boswell escorting his wife from Paris. He soon tired of London's lionising, and stayed for some time in Wootton in Derbyshire, where he wrote a great part of his *Confessions*. Before the summer of 1767 he had quarrelled with Hume and was back again in Paris. He died in 1778, in



the same year as Voltaire, having in his later years finished his *Confessions* and written his *Dialogues*. It seems probable that for the last ten years of his life Rousseau was not entirely sane. He was amazingly "touchy" and pitifully easily offended, having been born, as Hume said, "without a skin."

Most of our knowledge of Rousseau's private life has been learned from his own *Confessions*, in which with a candour unrivalled by anyone but Pepys, and without Pepys's ingenuous humour, he reveals himself without reticence or reservation. In 1743 he commenced his association with Thérèse la Vasseur, whom he married shortly before his death. She had been an inn servant, apparently without beauty, education, or intelligence, and was hopelessly vulgar and immoral. By her Rousseau had five children, all of whom, according to his own story, were consigned to the foundling hospital immediately after their birth.

There is little literary value either in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* or in *Émile*. In the *Social Contract* Rousseau shows himself the disciple of Locke. He insists that the two most valuable things in life are Liberty and Equality.

The opening words of his epoch-making work, the *Social Contract*, which, as Morley says, "sent such a thrill through the generations to which they were uttered in two continents," were these, "*Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.*" Rousseau knew hardly any history, or he would have realised that man has been born free in few ages of the world. But he knew just enough to search back for his ideal free birth to those far-away times before man was civilised, and was therefore presumably unaffected and natural. The theory of the *Social Contract* is that all government should be based on the consent of the governed. The people are the sovereign, and the will of the people must be carried out by an executive authority chosen by them. The State in the eighteenth century was the king. It should be the people, and the one duty of the State should be to look after and educate all its citizens. The *Social Contract* was the gospel of the Jacobins, and Saint-Just and Robespierre moulded their legislative decrees on Rousseau's teaching.

Rousseau's literary power appears at its fullest in his *Confessions*, the most famous and surprising autobiography in all literature. Rousseau is his own hero. He declares: "I have ever thought and still think myself, considering everything, the best of men." He cheerfully admits his vices, but he believes that there is no human being who does not "conceal some odious vice"; comparatively he is an admirable individual, and he determines to reveal himself completely, believing that by showing himself in his true colours, less candid persons will feel that, bad as he is, they are really worse. Writing of the days in which he was apprenticed to a Geneva watchmaker, he says:



Thus I learned to covet, dissemble, lie, and, at length, to steal, a propensity I never before felt the least inclination to, though since that time I have never been able entirely to divest myself of it. Unsatisfied desire led naturally to this vice, and this is the reason why pilfering is so common among footmen and apprentices, although the latter, as they grow up, and find themselves in a position where everything is at their command, lose this shameful propensity.

Though he is entirely pleased with himself, Rousseau is not given to vain boasting—he never exaggerates his skill as a musician, for example—and the self-revelation is fascinating because it is obviously sincere.

My passions are extremely violent ; while under their influence, nothing can equal my impetuosity. I am then an absolute stranger to discretion or decorum. I am rude, violent, and daring : no shame can stop, no danger intimidate me. My mind is frequently so engrossed by a single object, that beyond it the whole world is not worth a thought. I am all enthusiasm at one instant, and the next I am plunged into a state of despair. In my more temperate moments I am indolent and timid, and it becomes an intolerable labour for me to say or do anything.

One of the charms in the *Confessions* is the incidental descriptions of scenery and the often expressed joy in natural beauty. Love of nature had before been expressed in poetry, and on rare occasions in prose ; but with Rousseau it became a positive and self-conscious motive.

Rousseau has been well described by Saintsbury as "A describer of the passions of the human heart and of the beauties of Nature. . . . He was the direct inspirer of the men who made the French Revolution, and the theories of his *Contrat Social* were closer at the root of Jacobin politics than any other. His fervid declamation about equality and brotherhood, and his sentimental republicanism, were seed as well suited to the soil in which they were sown as Montesquieu's reasoned constitutionalism was unsuited to it."

It remains to add a pair of anomalous facts : Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and André Chénier. The former produced a most idyllic novel, *Paul and Virginia*, which, except that it owed something to Rousseau's love of nature, was virtually untouched by the storms raised by Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau. (Chateaubriand's novels were doubtless influenced by *Paul and Virginia*. The Vicomte de Chateaubriand, 1768–1848, wrote a little verse, a great deal of prose, and volumes of letters ; his best work appeared in the opening decade of the nineteenth century.) André Chénier (1762–1794) is the only notable poet of the French Revolution itself ; like Chateaubriand, he was soldier, traveller, diplomat, politician, but he was neither diplomat nor politician enough to avoid having his head removed by the guillotine—a misfortune for which his friends and his writings were jointly responsible. St. John Lucas has linked Chateaubriand and Chénier thus

pregnantly : " Chateaubriand is the genius of the revolt against the classical fetish. . . . He, and not Chénier, is the protagonist of modern French poetry," for although he was an inconsiderable poet in his verse, yet in his prose he was a very considerable poet. Chateaubriand is the one Frenchman that can, in poetic prose, challenge a comparison with Sir Thomas Browne, Walter Savage Landor, and Thomas de Quincey.

## READING LIST

### ROUSSEAU :

- The Confessions*, 2 vols., Everyman's Library (Dent).
- Émile*, edited by W. N. Payne (Appleton).
- Another edition of *Émile* in Everyman's Library (Dent).
- The Social Contract and Other Essays* in Everyman's Library (Dent).
- Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (Dent).
- Viscount Morley's *Rousseau*, 2 vols. (Macmillan).
- Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism* (Constable).

### DIDEROT :

- Viscount Morley's *Diderot and the Encyclopædists*, 2 vols. (Macmillan).
- Early Philosophical Works (Open Court Publishing Co.).
- Le Neveu de Rameau* (Hachette).

### BEAUMARCHAIS :

- The Barber of Seville*, translated by A. B. Myrick in the Temple Dramatists (Dent).
- Mariage de Figaro* (Oxford University Press).

### VOLTAIRE :

- Life of Charles XII and The Age of Louis XIV*, Everyman's Library (Dent).
- Zadig and Other Tales*, Bohn's Popular Library (Bell).
- The White Bull and Other Stories*, translated by C. E. Vulliamy (Heffer).
- Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau in England*, by J. Churton Collins (Nash).
- Viscount Morley's *Voltaire* (Macmillan).

See, especially, Émile Faguet, *The Eighteenth Century, Literary Portraits*, for extremely acute studies and accounts of most of the writers mentioned in this chapter. Also Saintsbury's and Dowden's histories of French literature.

A most valuable book for the political and social ferment leading to and informing the Revolution is Lord Elton's *The Revolutionary Idea in France, 1789-1871* (Arnold).



## XXIV

### GOETHE, SCHILLER, AND LESSING

#### § 1

#### GOETHE

**B**EFORE 1750, Germany had remarkably little poetry, a very poor literature; before the eighteenth century it was sparse indeed! Mention, however, must be made of Walter von der Vogelweide (about 1170–1230); the folk-songs of the Middle Ages; then, so very much later, F. von Hagedorn (1708–1754), C. F. Gellert (1715–1769), the dramatist Klopstock (1724–1823); all these men, whatever else they wrote, were not even—excepting Klopstock—poets for the most part. Add to these the anonymous authors of the *Nibelungenlied* (see the chapter entitled “The Middle Ages”), and some alchemical, astrological, mystical prose-writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and you have almost the sum-total of German literary achievement before “the great age of German literature” (say 1760–1830). Literary historians, however, usually speak of the Classical Period (often delimited: 1748–1805) and the Romantic Period (from 1805 or 1810 until 1840 or 1845).

When, eight years after Goethe's death (in 1832), Carlyle delivered his lecture on the Hero as Man of Letters, he acclaimed him as the greatest, and said: “To that man there was given what we may call a life in the Divine Idea of the World; vision of the inward divine mystery: and strangely, out of his Books, the world rises imaged once more as godlike, the workmanship and temple of a God, illuminated all, not in fierce impure fire-splendour as of Mahomet, but in mild celestial radiance;—really a Prophecy in these most unprophetic times; to my mind by far the greatest, though one of the quietest, among all the great things that have come to pass in them.” But having said this he turned abruptly from Goethe with the observation that the time was not ripe to talk at large about him to an English cultured audience. “Speak as I might, Goethe, to the great majority of you, would remain problematic, vague; no impression but a false one could be realised.”

Since these words were uttered Goethe's appeal to English readers has steadily advanced. If it suffered a check by reason of the two wars

with his nation the anniversary celebrations in 1949 showed our realisation of his greatness. Matthew Arnold has spoken for us :

When Goethe's death was told, we said :  
Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.  
Physician of the iron age,  
Goethe has done his pilgrimage.  
He took the suffering human race,  
He read each wound, each weakness clear ;  
And struck his finger on the place,  
And said : *Thou ailest here, and here !*  
He looked on Europe's dying hour  
Of fitful dream and feverish power ;  
His eye plunged down the weltering strife,  
The turmoil of expiring life—  
He said : *The end is everywhere ;*  
*Art still has truth, take refuge there !*  
And he was happy, if to know  
Causes of things, and far below  
His feet to see the lurid flow  
Of terror, or insane distress,  
And headlong fate, be happiness.

Goethe, without being a Shakespeare, was cast in that mighty mould which we must call Shakespearean. He fell short of Shakespeare, and he was different from Shakespeare, who was, so to speak, a "ninth wave" breaking on our Elizabethan shores with the momentum of great seas behind him, whereas Goethe was virtually a first wave unsupported and unimpelled by tradition or racial inspiration. Shakespeare crowned English literature. Goethe founded German literature. No Chaucer, no Spenser, behind *him* ; no long speech of his race ; no great companions such as Shakespeare had ; no air of poetry and national expression such as Shakespeare breathed. Naked, Goethe came into German literature ; clothed in purple and fine linen of his own weaving he went out.

Yet Goethe is little read in England to-day. A great deal that he wrote will never be read. He is still German, still remote, and there have been two wars with Germany. Yet Carlyle's and Arnold's words stand good. In 1914 there was an ignoble tendency to belittle Goethe, and to go back, so to speak, on all that we ever said or thought in his praise. As if true greatness does not survive the follies of men and their epileptic falls into strife and disorder ! Shortly after the Great War of 1914-1918 Edmund Gosse wrote these monitory words :

We must be careful to see that the natural prejudice which recent events have created, or emphasised, in our minds against German schools of thought



does not extend to depriving us of the incomparable privilege of sunning ourselves in the broad light of Goethe.

It is this broad light that remains unweakened, as all light does which prophetically lights up the things that are of to-day, yesterday, and for ever. Of a surety, there is good reason to-day why we should read Goethe, who was not only great in an age of war and ferment like our own, but foresaw so many of the things which were to come and which are now with us. He died in 1832, and it was in 1827 that he said to young Eckermann :

We Germans are of yesterday. We have indeed been properly cultivated for a century ; but a *few centuries more* must still elapse before so much mind and elevated culture will become universal amongst our people that they will appreciate beauty like the Greeks, that they will be inspired by a beautiful song, and that it will be said of them, " it is long since they were barbarians."

He compared the typical German and the typical Englishman of his age with the wisdom and penetration of an observing father. Young Britons came to Weimar frequently, and Goethe's eye was on them. He saw two stages of development—a real gulf which " a few centuries more " were needed to bridge. " Still," objected Eckermann,

Still, I would not assert that the young Englishmen in Weimar are more clever, more intelligent, better informed, or more excellent at heart than other people.

Goethe did not contradict him, but answered :

The secret does not lie in those things, my good friend. Neither does it lie in birth and riches ; it lies in the courage which they have to be what Nature has made them. There is nothing vitiated or spoilt about them, there is nothing half-way or crooked ; but such as they are, they are thoroughly complete men.

The sight of our Scotch Highlanders under the Duke of Wellington in Brussels reduced Goethe to despair :

They all carried their heads so freely and gallantly, and stepped so lightly along with their strong bare legs, that it seemed as if there were no original sin, and no ancestral failing, so far as they were concerned.

In short, Goethe knew in 1828 why the Allies were going to win the wars, in 1918 and in 1945.

He looked wisely and wistfully on English literature. He had formed himself in his first period on Shakespeare, and reverted later to his great model. He envied Scott. He admired Byron to distraction. He understood why Burns is great as well as anyone has understood it.

Goethe would have fought in the Napoleonic Wars if he had been of military age. He was reproached for not having even written war songs, and talking in his last year about this, he said to Eckermann :

How could I write songs of hatred without hating ! . . . Altogether, national hatred is something peculiar. You will always find it strongest and most violent where there is the lowest degree of culture. But there is a degree where it vanishes altogether, and where one stands to a certain extent *above* nations, and feels the weal or woe of a neighbouring people, as if it had happened to one's own. This degree of culture was conformable to my nature, and I had become strengthened in it long before I had reached my sixtieth year.

A passage which might well have been included in the breviary of the League of Nations.

Is this man to be neglected by us as German and remote, or severable from us by events and conditions which he never foresaw because they never belonged to his world ? Can his " broad light " be overcast ?

One of the earliest and most profound impressions made on this mighty German was made by our own Oliver Goldsmith. The man who has so often been described as a self-absorbed Olympian, contemplating the life of his fellow-men rather than sharing in it, and delivering messages too lofty for " human nature's daily food," said of *The Vicar of Wakefield* nearly sixty years after he had read it :

It is not to be described, the effect that Goldsmith's *Vicar* had upon me, just at the critical moment of mental development. That lofty and benevolent irony, that fair and indulgent view of all infirmities and faults, that meekness under all calamities, that equanimity under all changes and chances, and the whole train of kindred virtues, whatever names they bear, proved my best education ; and in the end there are thoughts and feelings which have reclaimed us from all the errors of life.

It seems well thus to relate Goethe to ourselves, because it cannot be maintained that many English readers can face the huge task of reading his works in a German light, or of understanding them as a great German phenomenon and development. Much that he wrote has faded. Much will never fade.

Where, then, look for Goethe's " broad light," and how are we to " sun ourselves " in that light ? Probably the best advice that can be given to readers in an age of hurry and of multiplying appeals to their attention is to read that wonderful record of Goethe's thoughts and table-talk, *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret*. It is one of the most eye-opening and stimulating books in the world. The work was translated from the German a good many years ago by John Oxenford and published



in the Bohn Library. Eckermann, when he met his master, was a young poet; Goethe was in his seventy-fourth year, and full of old experience and prophetic strain. Their friendship lasted until Goethe's death, nine years later, and the *Conversations* are the record of a great man's talk and a young man's discipleship.

An interesting element in these *Conversations* is Goethe's general literary advice to his young friend; it is as applicable to-day to young writers as it was a hundred years ago. Thus he urges Eckermann to found his poems on actual experiences, and to seek inspiration in realities—not in large and vague reflections. "I attach no value to poems snatched out of the air." Apprehend the individual is his counsel:

While you content yourself with generalities everyone can imitate you; but in the particular no one can—and why? because no others have experienced exactly the same thing.

Goethe's mind was as practical as it was speculative, as critical as it was imaginative, and thus Eckermann's pages read like those of a super-common-place book. Here you find Goethe discussing a classical medal; there, with the nicest learning, the art of making bows and arrows; or he is pointing out the beauty of a master's drawing, or developing his theory of colour, or expounding the value of inoculation—there is no end to his variety. Thus he discusses the fashion, beginning then, and rampant to-day, of putting quaint old furniture into modern houses.

From all these details of life Goethe continually returns to the highest and deepest subjects that can occupy man. Here is an observation which has a profound bearing on the present cult of spiritualism:

This occupation with the ideas of immortality is for people of rank, and especially ladies, who have nothing to do. But an able man, who has something regular to do here, and must toil and struggle and produce day by day, leaves the future world to itself, and is active and useful in this. Thoughts about immortality are also good for those who have not been successful here; and I would wager that, if the good Tiedge had enjoyed a better lot, he would also have had better thoughts.

And this is another of his deeper reflections:

People treat it as if that incomprehensible and most high Being, who is even beyond the reach of thought, were only their equal. Otherwise, they would not say the *Lord God*, the *dear God*, the *good God*. This expression comes to them, especially to the clergy, who have it daily in their mouths, a mere phrase, a barren name, to which no thought is attached whatever. If they were impressed by His greatness they would be dumb, and through veneration unwilling to name Him.

Even these few quotations will indicate the range of a book in which the "broad light" of Goethe is suffused in every page.

## § 2

Johann Wolfgang Goethe was the son of an imperial councillor, and his birthplace was Frankfort-on-Maine, in 1749. While a student his interests grew so broad that, Leonardo-like, during an outwardly very placid lifetime he produced countless essays on every branch of natural history, and monographs on a score of subjects ranging from law to religion; he made contributions to science that placed him among the forerunners of those great thinkers who have set forth the doctrine of evolution; and he painted pictures, worked at sculpture, managed a theatre, translated several famous works, including Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, and as a critic prophesied the future of both Scott and Carlyle as he affirmed the splendour of Byron. His career has long been the best argument in the hands of those who believe a thoroughgoing, all-round culture to be a necessity for the artist. Incidentally, he had many love-affairs and attachments. Over eighteen are on record, and each of them left its mark on his character and his work.

*Goetz with the Iron Hand*, written under Shakespearean influence, was published when he was twenty-four. Goethe next concentrated on a figure of limitless sensibility, and his *Sorrows of Werther*, a story published a year later, produced an almost unexampled sensation. It is based on an actual occurrence by which Goethe had recently been impressed, a young man named Jerusalem having shot himself in consequence of an unhappy attachment for a married lady. In Werther's distracted mind the thought of a similar suicide is developed very gradually from a skilfully dramatised incident, during which Werther is playing with the pistols of a friend, and idly presses the muzzle of one of them to his forehead. Countless readers put into the story their own exaggerated cravings, unsatisfied passions, and imaginary sorrows; and it has been said that suicides became quite fashionable from China to Peru, many being actually laid to the poor author's charge!

Within the next twelve years Goethe had completed three of his finest dramas, *Egmont*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and *Torquato Tasso*—dramas which it does not seem necessary to discuss here in detail.

An impressive characteristic of all Goethe's work is the length of time and the amount of labour he expended in bringing it to completion. His largest expenditure of time and labour went to the preparation of the two best-known masterpieces, for *Faust* was commenced as far back as



1773, when he was twenty-four, the first part of it being finally completed in 1806, the second not till 1831. *Wilhelm Meister*, his prose masterpiece, was begun four years after *Faust*, and was finished only three years before Goethe's death, its composition thus spreading over a period of fifty-two years, as against fifty-eight years in the case of *Faust*! But the second part of each of these works is inferior in every way to the first part. Indeed, the general reader is hardly aware that *Faust* does not conclude at that magnificent moment in which is heard the choir of angels declaring triumphantly of the dying Margaret that, despite the machinations of Mephistopheles and the sin committed by her with Faust that engulfs herself, her mother, brother, and child, "She is saved": the moment that ends with the cry of the demon to Faust—"Hither to me!"—the most terrible cry in the whole range of supernatural literature.

The incidents leading to this great climax have been made familiar through countless versions of legends and story, one of the earliest to recognise tremendous possibilities in Dr. Faustus and his ultimate damnation being our own Christopher Marlowe. The legend of Faust goes back far. The story is that this magician, a native of Swabia, was left a fortune by his uncle. He wasted it in riotous living, pursued pleasure and did not find it. When he had spent all, instead of returning like the Prodigal to the haunts of peace and purity, he made a pact with the Devil that he might live his life of indulgence for twenty-four years, at the end of which period he would give up his body and soul to his great partner. On such a theme any great philosophical poet might build. Goethe is said to have received his first inspiration for his drama from a marionette performance in which Faust was beaten to death by the Devil, much to the edification of all good Christians among the audience. There are thirty or forty translations of Goethe's *Faust* in English, and Bayard Taylor's rendering is to be recommended, for it is easily obtainable, and conveys the spirit and substance of the German original with admirable success. Margaret's song at the spinning-wheel, after her first meeting with Faust, may be quoted as a fair example of Taylor's work, and also as representing the exquisite tenderness of Goethe's lyric poetry:

My peace is gone,  
My heart is sore;  
I never shall find it,  
Ah, nevermore! . . .

To see him, him only,  
At the pane I sit;  
To meet him, him only,  
The house I quit.

Faust's answer to Margaret's inquiry as to his belief in God is an example of Goethe's power :

Who dare express Him ?  
 And who profess Him,  
 Saying : " I believe in Him ! "  
 Who, feeling, seeing, deny His being,  
 Saying : " I believe Him not ! "  
 The All-enfolding, the All-upholding,  
 Folds and upholds he not thee, me, Himself !  
 Arches there not the sky above us ?  
 Lies not beneath us, firm, the earth ?  
 And rise not, on us shining,  
 Friendly, the everlasting stars ?  
 Look I not, eye to eye, on thee,  
 And feel'st not, thronging  
 To head and heart, the force  
 Still weaving its eternal secret,  
 Invisible, visible, round thy life ?  
 Vast as it is, fill with that force thy heart,  
 And when thou in the feeling wholly blessed art,  
 Call it, then, what thou wilt,—  
 Call it Bliss ! Heart ! Love ! God !

Of *Faust*, G. H. Lewes has said :

It appeals to all minds with the irresistible fascination of an eternal problem, and with the charm of endless variety. It has every element : wit, pathos, wisdom, farce, mystery, melody, reverence, doubt, magic, and irony : not a chord of the lyre is unstrung, not a fibre of the heart untouched. Students earnestly wrestling with doubt, striving to solve the solemn riddles of life, feel their pulses strangely agitated by this poem ; and not students alone, but as Heine, with allowable exaggeration, says, every billiard-marker in Germany puzzles himself over it. In *Faust* we see, as in a mirror, the eternal problem of our intellectual existence.

The student of *Faust* will find no lack of commentators to help him on his way. But none will be needed for the appreciation of the poetical beauties of Goethe's masterpiece—of the subtlety of its characterisations, of the glowing fancy which illumines so many passages, from the prologue in heaven down to the last thrilling prison scene, and of the charming lyrical pieces and songs with which the tragedy is interspersed.

Goethe's greatest novel, *Wilhelm Meister*, was begun in 1777. Next to *Faust* it is his chief work and contains the most of his philosophy of life. It is very long, and to English readers not a little wearisome. Goethe did not complete the last "book" of the story until 1829. The importance of *Wilhelm Meister* lies in the fact that it was the pioneer of the "novel



with a purpose," and the first application of the novel to moral and cultural instruction. Its theme is the importance of a man choosing his vocation aright.

The pictures in *Wilhelm Meister* of German life and society are done with great skill. None but the author of *Faust* could have written it; for not only does *Wilhelm Meister* show the general advance of man from immaturity to perfection of intellect and life-culture, but the sequel (*Wilhelm Meister's Wanderings*) is very closely related to the second part of *Faust*, in which the erstwhile pawn of Mephistopheles flings from him his first unhappy environment and advances through all forms of culture, statesmanship, science, art, and war, to the final and simple wisdom of disinterested service rendered to his fellow-men.

For Goethe's pure vision the English reader may go to his *Maxims and Reflections*, translated by Bailey Saunders. They are in four sections: "Life and Character," "Literature and Art," "Science," and "Nature." They are not epigrams, nor have they the polish and neatness of the French *pensée*. As Saunders remarks, it is depth and truth and sanity of observation that marks these registrations of Goethe's thoughts: "it is no concern of his to dazzle the mind by the brilliancy of his wit; nor does he labour to say things because they are striking, but only because they are true." We may well take leave of Goethe by quoting some of these pearls of wisdom:

How can a man come to know himself? Never by thinking but by doing. Try to do your duty, and you will know at once what you are worth.

The most insignificant man can be complete if he works within the limits of his capacities, innate and acquired; but even fine talents can be obscured, neutralised, and destroyed by lack of the indispensable requirement of symmetry. This is a mischief which will often occur in modern times; for who will be able to come up to the claims of an age so full and intense as this, and one, too, that moves so rapidly?

It is a great error to take oneself for more than one is, or for less than one is worth.

Character calls forth character.

I keep silence about many things, for I do not want to put people out of countenance; and I am well content if they are pleased with things that annoy me.

Piety is not an end, but a means: a means of attaining the highest culture by the purest tranquillity of soul.

Whoso is content with pure experience and acts upon it has enough of truth. The growing child is wise in this sense.

Certain minds must be allowed their peculiarities.

Everyone has his peculiarities and cannot get rid of them; and yet many a one is destroyed by his peculiarities, and those, too, of the most innocent kind.

A state of things in which every day brings some new trouble is not the right one.

Soon after the first meeting of Goethe and Schiller, which took place in 1794, the two poets engaged in a bout of friendly rivalry which they christened "A Year of Ballads," composing many pieces one against the other. The ballads that Schiller composed were superior to the majority of Goethe's, and although he can hardly be accounted as of the front rank of lyric poets, Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller is second to none in German dramatic poetry. Not only is he the best-loved, the favourite poet among his own people to this day, but his position is high among the world's writers of dramatic verse.

Three German poets contemporary with the pre-*Faustian* Goethe are Matthias Claudius (1740-1815), who sang with robust simplicity; G. A. Bürger (1747-1794), master of the ballad, his *Lenore* (1773) exercising a European influence; and Ludwig Hölty (1748-1776), disciple of the turgid Klopstock yet a possessor of authentic lyricism and elegiac sincerity.

## § 3

## SCHILLER

Schiller, a great lyrical poet and a scholar as well as a very great dramatist, was born in 1759 at Marbach, ten years later than his friend, and he endured a life of poverty and ill-health very bravely, pursuing in turn the labours of a surgeon, an editor, a theatre-manager, and a professor of history. The main result of his own *Sturm und Drang* period had been his arrest and flight into hiding from the tyrannous Duke Carl Eugen; therefore the friendship of Goethe, that commenced when Schiller was thirty-five, was like a gift of balm from heaven.

Under the stimulus of his new friendship Schiller completed the work which Carlyle declares to have been the "greatest dramatic writing of which the eighteenth century can boast," despite the fact that its author's health was so bad that every hour at his desk cost him several hours' suffering. This work is a magnificent trilogy (1798-1799), consisting of *Wallenstein's Camp*, *The Two Piccolomini*, and *Wallenstein's Death*, the last-named having been translated by Coleridge; it "remains the most effective and popular of the greater German tragedies" (Gilbert Waterhouse).

A direct result of the contact with Goethe was the writing of *William Tell* (1804), Hans Schiller's most popular drama, and the last he lived to finish. He had composed in quick succession his dramatic portraits of Mary Stuart (1800) and Joan of Arc (1801), and that very moving tragedy, *The Bride of Messina* (1803)—three fine pieces of work; about this time Goethe was planning to write an epic dealing with the partly legendary,



partly actual hero of the Swiss Revolution, William Tell, who is ordered by the tyrant Gessler to shoot an apple from his little son's head or, if he should aim wrongly, die. But Goethe's scheme came to naught, and Schiller, fired by their many talks on the subject, resolved to take over the theme and treat it dramatically. The result was a noble one. The play was rapturously received throughout Germany, crystallising as it did the national aspiration towards freedom. Goethe staged it at Weimar, and Weber offered to set it to music. One of the most thrilling moments of the play follows immediately on Tell's triumph over his terrible ordeal with the arrow and the apple. The baffled Gessler notices a second arrow in Tell's belt, and demands an explanation :

TELL (*confused*). It is a custom with all archers, sir.

GESSLER. No, Tell, I cannot let that answer pass.

There was some other motive, well I know.

Frankly and freely let me have the truth :—

Whate'er it be, I promise thee thy life.

Wherefore the second arrow ?

TELL.

Well, then, my lord,

Since you have promised not to take my life,

I will, without reserve, declare the truth.

(*He draws the arrow from his belt, and fixes the governor with a terrible look.*)

If that my hand had struck my darling child,

This second arrow should have pierced your heart.

And be assured, I should not then have missed !

Goethe and Schiller formed the habit of sending greetings to each other on the first day of the new year. On January 1, 1805, Goethe inadvertently wrote in his letter the phrase "the last year." He rewrote the note, but again the phrase appeared. With a shudder of presentiment he said, "I feel that for one of us this is the last year." And, true enough, ere half its course was run Schiller was dead. At the news the great, calm Goethe broke down completely. "He covered his face with his hands and sobbed like a woman. For days no one dared mention Schiller's name in his presence." He never spoke of Schiller's "death" ; it was always "When I lost him." And once in a letter he wrote, "The half of my existence has gone from me."

Schiller was, both in himself and in his influence, a more important figure in European literature than this brief notice may suggest.

Goethe survived his friend by twenty-seven years. His own death, at the age of eighty-three, with honours thick upon him, was as serene as his life had been. The end came, we read, while he was seated in his arm-chair, with his daughter-in-law holding his hand in hers. Half an

hour previously he had asked that the shutters might be opened to let the day enter. Often since that event, which Matthew Arnold celebrated in one of his most noble poems, has it been remarked how characteristic it was that he who had been the great "light-bringer" of his age should conclude his own pilgrimage with the prayer that began it—"Licht ! mehr licht !"—"Light ! more light !"

## § 4

## LESSING

Goethe's supremacy in German creative literature has its counterpart in Lessing's supremacy in German criticism. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was born in 1729, and was therefore Goethe's senior by twenty years. His early life was that of a student at Leipzig and Berlin. He had been destined for the Church, but his genius ran to the cultivation of his taste and its correction by the highest standards. He was early attracted to the stage and to the history of the theatre. In 1750 he published his *History of the Theatre*, and five years later his tragedy, *Miss Sarah Sampson*, which influenced Germany by its abandonment of French dramatic conventions in favour of the much wider freedom of English drama. In 1767 appeared his comedy, *Minna von Barnhelm*—the first great German comedy and still one of the four or five best ; in 1772 his *Emilia Galotti*—the oldest German tragedy to retain its place on the stage ; in 1779 his *Nathan the Wise*, a dramatic presentation of the immeasurable power and value of religious tolerance. Various critical literary studies came from his pen which need not be named. His *Dramatic Notes* are of high importance still. Developing his attack on French classical tragedy, he reasoned that Greek drama and Shakespeare were the true models for German dramatic art to follow. Lessing was, in fact, the founder of the immense German appreciation of Shakespeare.

*Laocoon* was published in 1766. In its kind, it was the greatest work published in the eighteenth century. It was an original and masterly inquiry into the principles of criticism as they are founded on the history of human expression. It is not too much to say that it made Goethe and Schiller possible. Goethe himself said : "One must be a youth in order to realise the effect produced upon us by Lessing's *Laocoon*, which transported us from the region of miserable observation into the free fields of thought."

What Lessing did was to lay down, in masterly fashion, a distinction which is eternal but which had been much obscured in his age—the distinction, or rather the difference, between the functions of poetry and the plastic arts (sculpture and painting).



Lessing called his book *Laocoon* because it suited him to make the famous statue of Laocoon and his two sons being strangled by Jove-sent serpents (after Laocoon's warning to the Trojans not to receive the Wooden Horse) a test of what could rightly be done in sculpture to represent agony in marble, as against what could be rightly done by a poet (Virgil) to describe it in words. The statue was no more than a text, but because it was his text he made it his title. His point is that sculpture and painting cannot do, and rightly refrain from doing, what can be done by the poet.

In exploring this difference of principle, Lessing illuminates all criticism. It is impossible to read *Laocoon* without seeing and feeling in every page his honesty of thought. He never dogmatizes. He gives its due to every argument contrary to his own view, and this so fairly as almost to weaken his own thesis in the eyes of readers who want strong writing and anvil-like blows of conclusion. But this was wholly characteristic of Lessing, who thought and wrote :

If God were to hold in his *right* hand all Truth, and in his *left* hand the single ever-active impulse to seek after Truth, even though with the condition that I must eternally remain in error, and say to me, "Choose," I would with humility fall before his *left* hand and say, "Father, give ! For pure thoughts belong to Thee alone !"

These are noble words, and Goethe must surely have had them in mind when he wrote of Lessing : "Only one equally great could understand him ; to mediocrity he was dangerous."

We cannot, however, leave the classical period without at least a brief mention of the work of four other poets, who, except Hölderlin, were also either scholars or important prose-writers : C. M. Wieland (1733-1813), Johann Heinrich Voss, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1805), and Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843).

Wieland was much influenced by Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, by Fielding and Sterne and Shakespeare. He wrote novels, some frivolous, some didactic ; poems ; and a translation of twenty-two of Shakespeare's plays (only *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into verse). Wieland was the glitter that is not gold. Voss, too, was a translator of some of Shakespeare's plays, and of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* ; he was also an original poet, his *Idylls* (especially *Louise*, 1784) delightfully presenting country life. Herder was a greater man than either Wieland or Voss, though a less finished poet than either ; his influence sprang mainly from his essays and studies on art, literature, language. As a Classical-period lyric poet, only one man can compare with Goethe and Schiller : Hölderlin, whose unhappy, hopeless love-affair rendered insane a man congenitally despondent. "His mind was completely enthralled by Greece, not the sham Greece of Wieland, but the glorious Greece of Goethe and Byron. His *Hyperion*

(1797-1799) is a rhapsodical romance. . . . His poetry is limited in range, but sublime in quality," some of his work being Goethe and Schiller at their best ; and some of his rhymeless odes make " Klopstock's best odes look second-rate in comparison " (Gilbert Waterhouse).

At this point we may insert a brief mention of Adam Öhlenschläger (1779-1850), the most famous, and the best, of Danish poets and dramatists, who, like Goethe, Schiller, and Lessing, was also a fine scholar. He wrote many historical dramas and narrative and lyric poems. The following have been translated into English : *The Golden Horns*, 1803 ; *Aladdin*, 1805 ; *Hakon Jarl*, 1805 ; *Palnatoke*, 1809 ; *Axel and Valborg*, 1810 ; *Correggio*, 1811 ; *The Gods of the North*, 1819. Several of his works deal with Classical Greece—for instance, *Prometheus*, 1832, and *Sokrates*, 1835.

## READING LIST

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Ian G. Colvin, *I Saw the World*. Translations from Vogelweide (Arnold).  
GOETHE : Works in English in 14 vols., Bohn's Library (Bell).

*Poetry and Truth from my own Life*, 2 vols., Bohn's Popular Library (Bell).  
*Wilhelm Meister* (Carlyle's translation) and *Conversations with Eckermann* are in Everyman's Library.

W. Rose, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (Heffer).

*Faust* in Bohn's Popular Library (Bell). There are other translations ; Bayard Taylor's—the best—is in the World's Classics.

*Life of Goethe*, by G. H. Lewes.

*Life of Goethe*, G. H. Düntzer, translated by T. W. Lyster (Unwin).

Carlyle's *Essay on Goethe* (Cassell).

*Goethe, Man and Poet*, by H. W. Nevinson (Nisbet).

*A Study of Goethe*, by Barker Fairley (Oxford University Press).

SCHILLER : Translation of Works in 7 vols., Bohn's Library (Bell).

*Life of Schiller*, by Thomas Carlyle (Chapman).

LESSING : Complete edition of Plays in English, 2 vols. (Bell) ; *Laocoon*, translated by W. A. Steel, is in Everyman's Library.

The work of the three titular figures is admirably assessed by J. G. Robertson in *German Literature* (Home University Library) ; still more admirably in his larger book, *A History of German Literature* (1931 ; Blackwood)—the best history written by an Englishman.

Gilbert Waterhouse, *A Short History of German Literature* (1942 ; Methuen), constitutes an extremely useful *multum in parvo*.



## XXV

## WORDSWORTH, COLERIDGE, SOUTHEY, AND BLAKE

## § I

## WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

"I FIRMLY believe that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, of which all the world now recognises the worth, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time." Thus wrote Matthew Arnold more than fifty years ago, and thus, we may be sure, he would write were he alive to-day. But more memorable, because more explicit, is his tribute in "Memorial Verses," written in 1850 under the emotion he felt at Wordsworth's death :

He found us when the age had bound  
 Our souls in its benumbing round ;  
 He spoke, and loosed our hearts in tears.  
 He laid us as we lay at birth  
 On the cool flowery lap of earth,  
 Smiles broke from us and we had ease ;  
 The hills were round us, and the breeze  
 Went o'er the sunlit fields again ;  
 Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.

. . . . .  
 Ah ! since dark days still bring to light  
 Man's prudence and man's fiery might,  
 Time may restore us in his course  
 Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force ;  
 But when will Europe's latter hour  
 Again find Wordsworth's healing power ?

When, thirty years later, Arnold made his "Selections" from Wordsworth's poetry, and prefaced them with a critical essay, he remarked that since the year 1842 Tennyson had drawn the poetry-reading public from Wordsworth, and that it was still permitted to tenth-rate critics and compilers to speak of Wordsworth's poetry with ignorance, even with impertinence. He perceived that its abundance, and the inferiority of two-thirds of it to his best, had lowered the fame of a poet who may be ranked,

in the end, above Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Cowper, Burns, Shelley, and Keats. But as this hour had not come, it seemed to Arnold that it would be good to give the public only the best work of Wordsworth in his "Selections." This he did.

The "Selections" is still the best introduction to a poet whom many people read with difficulty or tedium because they do not read his poems as they were written—broodingly. They want quick results, immediate thrills, and tunes which they can easily remember. Wordsworth cannot be known thus. His poetry represents sixty years of meditation and communion with nature and human nature. He has to be approached along his own paths, and through moods and ways of thought akin to his own. He is difficult to read "at sight," but, read with insight, he is supreme in his sphere. John Morley, writing in 1888, said of Wordsworth :

By his secret of bringing the infinite into common life, as he evokes it out of common life, he has the skill to lead us, so long as we yield ourselves to his influence, with inner moods of settled peace, to touch, "the depth and not the tumult of the soul," to give us quietness, strength, steadfastness, and purpose, whether to do or to endure.

William Wordsworth died in 1850 as Poet Laureate under Queen Victoria. This fact has long kept alive in the public mind a certain illusion concerning his true period. For he lived to be eighty. He was born fourteen years before the death of Dr. Johnson. Gray had been dead only a year ; Goldsmith had four years to live. He was born eighteen years before Shelley, twenty-two years before Byron, and a quarter of a century before Keats. He was a boy when England lost her American colonies, but he was a virile and vigilant man when the French Revolution shook Europe, and he was in full maturity when the Industrial Age of England set in. And Morley describes his individual life in a very few words when he says : "During all the tumult of the great war which for so many years bathed Europe in fire, through all the throes and agitations in which peace brought forth the new time, Wordsworth for half a century (1799-1850) dwelt sequestered in unbroken composure and steadfastness in his chosen home amid the mountains and lakes of his native region, working out his own ideal of the high office of the Poet."

To his "chosen" home he was both physically and spiritually native. His father was a Cockermouth attorney, and estate-agent to Sir James Lowther, afterwards Earl of Lonsdale. His mother came of old Lakeland stock.

His schooldays at Cockermouth and Penrith were somewhat unfruitful of progress, but they were happy. He was a great reader, and devoured all Fielding's works, *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and the



*Arabian Nights*. "Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up, fostered alike by beauty and by fear." No man whose boyhood was dreamful and contemplative can read without emotion and understanding Wordsworth's statements in "The Prelude" of his early feelings. Invoking the "Wisdom of the Spirit of the Universe" he says :

Not in vain  
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn  
Of childhood, didst thou intertwine for me  
The passions that build up our human soul.

Not seldom, we feel, he recaptures the very air that was in his boyhood's nostrils and the thoughts that were then enlarging his inheritance of life ; as in the lines in which he describes his sport on frozen lake or river :

So through the darkness and the cold we flew,  
And not a voice was idle ; with the din  
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud ;  
The leafless trees and every icy crag  
Tinkled like iron ; while far distant hills  
Into the tumult sent an alien sound  
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars  
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west  
The orange light of evening died away.

Note the spiritual essence in this perfect inventory of the hour and scene.

At seventeen Wordsworth went to Cambridge. In "The Prelude" he tells us a great deal more about his college vacations than about his college life, but his picture of a certain ash-tree near his room stands out :

Often have I stood  
Footbound uplooking at this lovely tree  
Beneath a frosty moon. The hemisphere  
Of magic fiction, verse of mine perchance  
May never tread ; but scarcely Spenser's self  
Could have more tranquil visions in his youth,  
Or could more bright appearances create  
Of human forms with superhuman powers,  
Than I beheld loitering on calm clear nights,  
Alone, beneath this fairy work of earth.

Of Wordsworth's daily life in London, after Cambridge, we know little more than he tells us in the seventh book of "The Prelude." He seems to have been a lonely and observant wanderer in its streets, and never to have lost for a moment the sense of the city's relation to the country or of its intensity and traffic of life to the large peace of nature.

As F. W. H. Myers says, he became the poet not of London considered as London, but of London considered as a part of the country. Hence it was that a few years later, in giving one of the greatest of sonnets to our literature, he paid to London the noblest of tributes, and one in which his own spirit is for ever contained. It is the sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802":

Earth has not anything to show more fair :  
 Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
 A sight so touching in its majesty ;  
 This City now doth, like a garment, wear  
 The beauty of the morning : silent, bare,  
 Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
 Open unto the fields, and to the sky ;  
 All bright and glittering in the smokeless air  
 Never did sun more beautifully steep,  
 In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill ;  
 Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep.  
 The river glideth at his own sweet will :  
 Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep ;  
 And all that mighty heart is lying still !

To this early period belongs an episode in Wordsworth's life which for a very long time after his death was entirely unknown and unsuspected by his biographers. It can no longer be ignored, for it is known, and, being known, its influence on the poet's character and on some of his deepest work cannot be doubted even if it can be only doubtfully traced. Full-blooded and haunted by a poet's dreams, careless of his university career, and inclined to procrastinate thoughts of a future one, Wordsworth crossed to France for the second time in November 1792, when he was about twenty-two years of age. He was an orphan, and his head was raised to inhale the wind of life. "The best of life," says Byron, "is but intoxication," and there seems to be no doubt that Wordsworth was intoxicated by his freedom to see and study the world, and by impulses which, high as they were, did not exclude those of the senses. He had the means to stay in France only a few months, but he lived from day to day. Such was the somewhat turbulent young man who arrived in Orleans by coach or diligence at the end of 1791 and found board and lodgings at eighty francs a month. It was in his search for quarters, apparently, that he met the Vallon family. Almost at once he fell in love with Annette, one of the four daughters who were living in the family house whence the father had gone to his grave and the mother to another husband. Annette, also, was an orphan. Wordsworth's only serious aim was to learn French in order that he might qualify himself to be a travelling tutor.



Annette became his tutor. It was a dangerous situation for both, as the event proved. Wordsworth's daughter was born on December 15, 1792.

His failure to marry Annette is best ascribed to his entire inability to support her and their child, at any rate until he had squared accounts with his guardians, to whom confession must be made. From that moment the tides of circumstance moved Wordsworth and Annette slowly but surely apart. War between England and France had long threatened and soon broke out. Dorothy Wordsworth took up her brother's case with his guardians, who, however, turned coldly away. She wrote tenderly to Annette, who responded most generously. She and her family were in danger of the guillotine during the Terror, and Wordsworth himself could go to France only under deadly peril. Annette longed for his return, and for marriage, chiefly that her position might be regularised and that little Caroline, who had been removed from her immediate care, might be all hers again. There are gaps in the story, and it is not absolutely certain whether Wordsworth dared the adventure or not.

He was coming under those influences which were in line with his genius and his opening career as a poet. He had settled down to cottage life with his sister. He had entered into poetic partnership with Coleridge, with whom he was preparing those "Lyrical Ballads" which were to be the foundation-stone of his poetic life. He alleviated his remorse by turning it into narrative poems in which his own situation was not revealed, but in which it is legible now. Not only so, but he had become a passionate lover of England's beauty and of all things English. His thoughts even wandered back to his youthful love, the dead "Lucy."

Annette was a garrulous Frenchwoman, with no English speech or sympathies, and with no culture like his own. Insensibly he had become only her watchful friend. And that he remained.

The story, as has been said, cannot be ignored now that it is fully known. It flickers not seldom in the depths of Wordsworth's poetry; it cannot but have given him lifelong knowledge of the human heart.

This was the one "drama," to use the word in a modern and not too healthy way, behind Wordsworth's great mission as poet and prophet. On the lakes of Grasmere and Rydal he lived for half a century, drawing from Nature her deepest lessons, and transmitting these to all who would sit still and read.

## § 2

Matthew Arnold says truly that nearly all his first-rate work was completed by the year 1808, when Byron had only just published his youthful "Hours of Idleness," when Scott had published nothing in poetry beyond

"The Lay of the Last Minstrel," and when Tennyson was yet unborn. The essence of all Wordsworth's message from nature to man is found in a poem which appeared so early as 1798 in that collaborative volume, *Lyrical Ballads*, which opened with "The Ancient Mariner," and ended with Wordsworth's "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey." This poem is named by Myers as "the consecrated formulary of Wordsworthian faith." There is, indeed, nothing to be learned about the quality and direction of Wordsworth's poetry that is not in this poem. Already he knew the valley of the Wye and had received from it undying impressions and sentiments.

Five years have past ; five summers . . .  
and again I hear  
These waters, rolling from their mountain springs  
With a soft inland murmur.

In this poem we learn the distinction between mere moralising in verse and great poetry about the conduct of life. Wordsworth was never so great as when he drew vast suggestions direct from nature and abandoned direct teaching and preaching. And yet of him it has been truly and finally said by Lord Morley, "He is a teacher, or he is nothing." Only he taught best when he saw through the transfusion of nature's calm and order into man's perplexed and disordered world. Consider these lines from "Tintern Abbey." He is recalling his earlier impressions of the same scenes as he had treasured them in many wanderings of body and spirit :

. . . Oft, in lonely rooms and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood and felt along the heart ;  
And passing even into my purer mind  
With tranquil restoration : feelings too  
Of unremembered pleasure : such, perhaps,  
As have no slight or trivial influence  
On that best portion of a good man's life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered acts  
Of kindness and of love.

But this is not all :

Nor less, I trust,  
To them I may have owed another gift,  
Of aspect more sublime ; that blessed mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened : that serene and blessed mood,



In which the affections gently lead us on,—  
 Until the breath of this corporeal frame  
 And even the motion of the human blood  
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
 In body, and become a living soul :  
 While an eye made quiet by the power  
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
 We see into the *life of things*.

But even now we have not touched the height of spirituality to which Wordsworth rises from the banks of the Wye to the things which are eternal and the same.

I have learned  
 To look on Nature, not as in the hour  
 Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing oftentimes  
 The still sad music of humanity,  
 Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
 Of elevated thoughts : a sense sublime  
 Of something far more deeply interfused,  
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
 And the round ocean and the living air,  
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;  
 A motion and a spirit, that impels  
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
 And rolls through all things.

Wordsworth himself, rooted in nature, drawing his ichor, so to speak, from earth and sky, has no use for the moralist who begins with morals. He thinks of him as

One to whose smooth-rubbed soul can cling  
 Nor form, nor feeling, great or small ;  
 A reasoning self-sufficient thing,  
 An intellectual All-in-All.

Not to the moralist, but to another kind of teacher, he points us :

He is retired as noontide dew,  
 Or fountain in a shady grove ;  
 And you must love him, ere to you  
 He will seem worthy of your love.

The outward shows of sky and earth,  
 Of hill and valley, he has viewed ;  
 And impulses of deeper birth  
 Have come to him in solitude.

## THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

In common things that round us lie  
Some random truths he can impart ;—  
The harvest of a quiet eye  
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

There is a beautiful consistency and oneness in Wordsworth's message. Who but the author of the lines just quoted could have drawn the portrait of the "Happy Warrior" ?—

Who, with a natural instinct to discern  
What knowledge can perform, is diligent to learn ;  
Abides by this resolve, and stops not there,  
But makes his moral being his prime care ;  
Who, doomed to go in company with Pain,  
And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train !  
Turns his necessity to glorious gain.

Whose powers shed round him in the common strife,  
Or mild concerns of ordinary life,  
A constant influence, a peculiar grace ;  
But who, if he be called upon to face  
Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined  
Great issues, good or bad for human kind,  
Is happy as a lover ; and attired  
With sudden brightness, like a man inspired.

—He who though thus endued as with a sense  
And faculty for storm and turbulence,  
Is yet a Soul whose master-bias leans  
To homefelt pleasure and to gentle scenes ;  
Sweet images ! which, wheresoe'er he be,  
Are at his heart ; and such fidelity  
It is his darling passion to approve ;  
More brave for this, that he hath much to love.

And while the mortal mist is gathering, draws  
His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause :  
This is the Happy Warrior ; this is he  
Whom every man in arms should wish to be.

Or who but he could have exclaimed ?—

My heart leaps up when I behold  
A Rainbow in the sky :  
So was it when my life began :  
So is it now I am a Man ;  
So be it when I shall grow old,  
Or let me die !



The child is Father of the Man ;  
And I could wish my days to be  
Bound each to each by natural piety.

Or have thus meditated ?—

I heard a thousand blended notes,  
While in a grove I sate reclined,  
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts  
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

Through primrose tufts, in that sweet bower,  
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths ;  
And 'tis my faith that every flower  
Enjoys the air it breathes.

From Heaven if this belief be sent,  
If such be Nature's holy plan,  
Have I not reason to lament  
What man has made of man ?

And when Wordsworth speaks of Duty, from what source does he draw inspiration ? From the flowers that laughingly live through warm hours and the stars that wheel through chill eternities :

Stern Lawgiver ! yet thou dost wear  
The Godhead's most benignant grace ;  
Nor know we anything so fair  
As is the smile upon thy face :  
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds  
And fragrance in thy footing treads ;  
Thou dost preserve the Stars from wrong ;  
And the most ancient Heavens, through Thee, are fresh and strong.

From such sanctions there is no appeal, for they are above argument, sectarianism, and variable definition.

### § 3

Wordsworth is often, perhaps most often, greatest as a teacher when he tells simple stories like those of *Michael* (a poem which it is impossible to read without some change of heart or some confirmation in goodness), *Ruth*, *The Leech Gatherer*, *Simon Lee*, or *Margaret* ; or when he blends reflection with the contemplation of a noble or stricken man or woman, as in *The Highland Girl*, *The Solitary Reaper*, or *Matthew*. His poetry is the harvest of solitude. In all his great work you meet a man who is going

out to find prophecies in the shaking of a reed and in the light of setting suns :

Yet who would stop, or fear to advance,  
Though home or shelter he had none,  
With such a sky to lead him on ?

It is true, also, that this poetry, produced in solitude, requires withdrawal in its readers. No doubt man needs wisdom and caution in following this, or any other, path to the highest things ; yet there are few men and women of character who would not say that the most precious and memorable moments in their lives have, in fact, been those in which they were alone with nature, and in that mood of " wise passiveness " which Wordsworth teaches us to cultivate.

He went to nature, not to decorate his thoughts, but to find them. He went, not to make literary patterns, but to " see into the life of things." His closest descriptions are suffused with meditation and wistfulness. One may instance that wonderful landscape in the poem composed *Upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty*, in 1818 :

No sound is uttered,—but a deep  
And solemn harmony pervades  
The hollow vale from steep to steep,  
And penetrates the glades.  
Far distant images draw nigh,  
Called forth by wondrous potency  
Of beamy radiance, that imbues  
Whate'er it strikes with gem-like hues !  
In vision exquisitely clear,  
Herds range along the mountain side ;  
And glistening antlers are descried,  
And gilded flocks appear.  
Thine is the tranquil hour, purpleal Eve !  
But long as god-like wish or hope divine  
Informs my spirit, ne'er can I believe  
That this magnificence is wholly thine !  
—From worlds not quickened by the sun  
A portion of the gift is won ;  
An intermingling of Heaven's pomp is spread  
On ground which British shepherds tread !

This is man's sempiternal homage to nature ; and the language, though magnificent, is that of the common heart, unjewelled, unfermented, unspoil by egotisms. It is the language of great poetry—a poetry which continually reminds us that man, who knew not how to live in Eden, has still to learn to live outside it. Its subject is that core of peace and worship, within each of us, around which all our passions and struggles whirl.



For many years Wordsworth reaped little or no profit from his poetry, being completely overshadowed in public favour by Byron and Scott. But his fame increased with a bound between 1830 and 1840. In 1837 it crossed the Atlantic and an American edition of his poems appeared. In 1843, on the death of Southey, he received a letter from the Lord Chamberlain offering him the Poet Laureateship. This he at first declined, but on being pressed to accept it by Sir Robert Peel, who told him that the Queen fully approved of the appointment as "justly due to the first of living poets," he gave way. He had already received, also, an annuity of £300 from the Civil List. His tranquil life at his beloved Rydal Mount continued until the end, which came, as the result of a cold and induced pleurisy, on April 23, 1850. He rests in Grasmere churchyard, among the people he loved and the hills and lakes that had been his lifelong joy and inspiration.

## § 4

## COLERIDGE

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born in 1772, his father being vicar of Ottery St. Mary. Like Lamb, he became a Bluecoat boy. He won a scholarship at Jesus College, Cambridge, but at the expiration of two years, for some mysterious reason, he ran away to London, where he loafed aimlessly about the streets, and ended by enlisting in the Light Dragoons as Private Comberback. One day it happened that two officers were discussing a quotation from Eusebius, when the private, overhearing them, suggested the true reading. The officers, as much astounded as if their dog had barked in Greek, drew out of him his story and communicated with his friends. And so the learned private left the Army.

He soon after joined his friend Southey, who lived at Bristol, where they were married to two sisters. And now Coleridge began his life as a free writer. He put forth in profusion prose and poetry alike; he started various periodicals, which shone like bubbles, and as quickly burst. With Wordsworth, he conceived and published the epoch-making little volume *Lyrical Ballads*, in which, as his own share, appeared *The Ancient Mariner*. This great romantic poem was written in 1797, in which year, he then being twenty-five, he produced a number of the poems which have made his name as great as that of Shelley, Keats, or Wordsworth, though these exquisite creations do not muster more than twenty when their utmost tale is told. The chief of these are *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, *Kubla Khan*, *Youth and Age*, *The Ode to France*, and *Dejection*. All are marked

by a peculiar faultless music all their own, sweet as the singing of the blessed spirits which the mariner heard upon the ship of terror :

And now 'tis like all instruments,  
Now like a lonely flute,  
And now it is an angel's song  
That makes the heavens be mute.

The second quality of these poems is their new and deep expression of the magic of romance. Let us take a few lines—almost any lines—from *Christabel* :

The lovely lady, Christabel,  
Whom her father loves so well,  
What makes her in the wood so late,  
A furlong from the castle gate ?  
She had dreams all yesternight  
Of her own betrothed knight ;  
And she in the midnight wood will pray  
For the weal of her lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,  
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,  
And naught was green upon the oak  
But moss and rarest mistletoe :  
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree  
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,  
The lovely lady, Christabel !  
It moaned as near, as near can be,  
But what it is she cannot tell—  
On the other side it seems to be  
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill ; the forest bare  
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak ?  
There is not wind enough in the air  
To move away the ringlet curl  
From the lovely lady's cheek—  
There is not wind enough to twirl  
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,  
That dances as often as dance it can,  
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,  
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel !  
Jesu, Maria, shield her well !  
She folded her arm beneath her cloak,  
And stole to the other side of the oak.  
What sees she there ?



There she sees a damsel bright,  
Drest in a silken robe of white,  
That shadowy in the moonlight shone :  
The neck that made that white robe wan,  
Her stately neck and arms were bare ;  
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,  
And wildly glittered here and there  
The gems entangled in her hair.  
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see  
A lady so richly clad as she—  
Beautiful exceedingly !

Or we may choose the end of *Kubla Khan*—a poem presumed to have been written in an opium-dream :

The shadow of the dome of pleasure  
Floated midway on the waves ;  
Where was heard the mingled measure  
From the fountain and the caves.  
It was a miracle of rare device,  
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice.  
A damsel with a dulcimer  
In a vision once I saw :  
It was an Abyssinian maid,  
And on her dulcimer she played  
Singing of Mount Abora.  
Could I revive within me  
Her symphony and song,  
To such a deep delight 'twould win me  
That with music loud and long,  
I would build that dome in air,  
That sunny dome ! those caves of ice !  
And all who heard should see them there,  
And all should cry, Beware ! Beware !  
His flashing eyes, his floating hair !  
Weave a circle round him thrice,  
And close your eyes with holy dread,  
For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

The poems we have mentioned form a kind of nosegay of resplendent blossoms, among which peep forth some lesser buds and bells of equal sweetness. Such is the little song :

I asked my fair one happy day  
What I should call her in my lay ;  
By what sweet name from Rome or Greece ;  
Lalage, Neæra, Chloris,  
Sappho, Lesbia, or Doris,  
Arethusa or Lucrece.

## THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

"Ah!" replied my gentle fair,  
"Beloved, what are names but air?  
Choose thou whatever suits the line;  
Call me Sappho, call me Chloris,  
Call me Lalage or Doris,  
Only, only call me Thine."

Coleridge wrote an important work of literary criticism, *Biographia Literaria*, which, though diffuse, contains much that is still of interest and value. As for the tiny bulk of poetry which has made his name immortal, the authority of Swinburne is decisive:

As a poet, his place is indisputable: it is high among the highest of all time. The highest lyric work is either passionate or imaginative. Of passion Coleridge has nothing; but for height and perfection of imaginative quality he is the greatest of lyric poets. This is his special power and this is his special praise.

His later life was melancholy. As a relief from bodily pain he resorted to opium, and by his thirtieth year was under fearful slavery. His marriage brought him a brief happiness, but he drifted helplessly away from his wife and children (Southey supporting them thereafter), just as earlier he had drifted away from his occupation as a Unitarian preacher, and then from poetry. His closing years were an orgy of talk, so that his inspiration was dried up at its source. Keats wrote of him after their one meeting:

I walked with him, at his alderman-after-dinner pace, for near two Miles, I suppose. In those two miles he broached a thousand things. Let me see if I can give you a list—Nightingales—Poetry—on Poetical sensation—Metaphysics—Different genera and species of Dreams—Nightmare—a dream accompanied with a sense of touch—single and double touch—a dream related—First and second consciousness—the difference explained between will and Volition—so say mathematicians from a want of smoking the second consciousness—Monsters—the Kraken—Mermaids—Southey believes in them—Southey's belief too much diluted—a Ghost story—Good morning—I heard his voice as he came towards me—I heard it as he moved away—I heard all the interval—if it may be called so.

And Charles Lamb gives an amusing, imaginary description of how, when Coleridge had buttonholed him on one occasion and, with eyes closed, began to talk "for talking's sake," he found himself unable to get away on some urgent errand; therefore he stealthily snipped off the button, coming back five hours later to find Coleridge still talking, with eyes closed and holding the button in his outstretched fingers! Coleridge died at Highgate on July 25, 1834.



§ 5

SOUTHEY

Robert Southey, born in 1774, was the son of a Bristol draper, but he was educated at Westminster School and Balliol, Oxford. He settled at Keswick, and turned out, during a long life, a vast mass of literary work of every imaginable kind. His poems, however, did not reach a level which calls for any lengthy comment. Not the least of them is *The Battle of Blenheim*, with the shattering irony of the lines :

And everybody praised the duke  
Who this great fight did win.  
"And what good came of it at last?"  
Quoth little Peterkin.  
"Why, that I cannot tell," said he,  
"But 'twas a famous victory."

*The Cataract of Lodore* is a *tour de force* and *Roderick, the Last of the Goths*, a fine piece of narrative, though redundant, which contains this charming vignette :

And when she stoopt  
Hot from the chase to drink, well pleased had seen  
Her own bright crescent, and the brighter face  
It crowned, reflected there.

But the lines written in his library are his finest :

My days among the Dead are past ;  
Around me I behold,  
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,  
The mighty minds of old :  
My never-failing friends are they,  
With whom I converse day by day.

With them I take delight in weal  
And seek relief in woe ;  
And while I understand and feel  
How much to them I owe,  
My cheeks have often been bedew'd  
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

My thoughts are with the Dead ; with them  
I live in long-past years,  
Their virtues love, their faults condemn,  
Partake their hopes and fears,  
And from their lessons seek and find  
Instruction with an humble mind

## THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

My hopes are with the Dead ; anon  
My place with them will be,  
And I with them shall travel on  
Through all Futurity ;  
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,  
That will not perish in the dust.

Southey's best work is in the published *Letters*, in the classic *Life of Nelson*, and in *The Doctor*, a rambling miscellany valued by many readers above all his other work. The theme of this delightful bedside book is the story of Daniel Dove and his horse Nobbs, which he first heard from Coleridge. Its humour lay in making it as long as possible. Southey packs into it all his odds and ends of learning, besides a love-story, and the immortal nursery-tale, told well for the first time, of *The Three Bears*. When Scott refused the Poet Laureateship in 1813 he recommended Southey for it, and this honour lifted a kindly and earnest man of letters to a position he did not quite deserve. A little time before his death his mind gave way, and yet his life was a busy, happy one.

Whereas Southey was verbose and diffuse, Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864) was economical and compact. After writing a strange yet lovely epic poem, published in 1796, he wrote many still more lovely lyrics and Greek-sculpturesque *Hellenics* (1847) and memorable epigrams ("I strove with none, For none was worth the strife"), and a powerful though sombre verse tragedy, *Count Julian* (1811). But his prose is perhaps even finer ; witness those masterly *Imaginary Conversations* between historical characters (Vols. 1-2, 1824 ; Vol. 3, 1828 ; Vols. 4-5, 1829), the unforgettable *Pericles and Aspasia* (1836), which contains some of the most magnificent prose in the language, and *Pentameron* (1837). Indeed, he, De Quincey, and Sir Thomas Browne are the three greatest prose-writers in the English language.

W. S. Landor was restless, quarrelsome, grimly manly, impressively courageous, violently impulsive ; yet once the quill was in his hand, he exercised a Classic self-restraint. One of his keenest admirers was his younger brother, the Rev. Robert Eyres Landor (1781-1869), who wrote several arresting poetic dramas, a long narrative poem, and two magistral historical novels based on the times of ancient Rome.

## § 6

### HOOD

After Southey came Thomas Hood, born in 1798, the son of a London bookseller whose *Song of the Shirt* and *The Bridge of Sighs* are realism



presented romantically, and whose *Dream of Eugene Aram* is a romantic masterpiece of horror, achieving by realistic methods a fine evil glamour. He earned a livelihood by what one critic has called "the broken-hearted jesting of a sick buffoon," for Hood died of consumption at a comparatively early age. But he was also one of the great technical experts in English verse, using the double and treble rhyme-ending with unprecedented facility :

Still, for all slips of hers,  
One of Eve's family—  
Wipe those poor lips of hers  
Oozing so clammily.

He also wrote some faultless lyrics as well as some very fine and noble serious verse. Of the first kind are the lines *Fair Inez* :

O, saw ye not fair Inez ?  
She's gone into the West,  
To dazzle when the sun is down  
And rob the world of rest.

Such, also, is the ballad :

It was not in the Winter  
Our loving lot was cast ;  
It was the Time of Roses,—  
We plucked them as we passed,

That churlish season never frowned  
On early lovers yet :—  
Oh no—the world was newly crowned  
With flowers when first we met !

'Twas twilight, and I bade you go,  
But still you held me fast ;  
It was the Time of Roses,—  
We pluck'd them as we passed.—

What else could peer thy glowing cheek,  
That tears began to stud ?  
And when I ask'd the like of Love,  
You snatched a damask bud ;

And oped it to the dainty core,  
Still glowing to the last,—  
It was the Time of Roses,  
We plucked them as we passed !

Of his serious poems we may take the last lines he ever wrote :

Farewell, Life ! My senses swim ;  
And the world is growing dim ;  
Thronging shadows cloud the light,  
Like the advent of the night,—  
Colder, colder, colder still  
Upwards steals a vapour chill—  
Strong the earthy odour grows—  
I smell the Mould above the Rose !

Welcome, Life ! the Spirit strives !  
Strength returns, and hope revives ;  
Cloudy fears and shapes forlorn  
Fly like shadows at the morn,—  
O'er the earth there comes a bloom—  
Sunny light for sullen gloom,  
Warm perfume for vapour cold—  
I smell the Rose above the Mould !

Hood's repute as a humorist has too much overshadowed his merits as a poet, which—as Rossetti, an unerring judge, considered—were very great and real. In the temple of fame his monument, though it may not strike the careless eye, is one that will not crumble.

## § 7

### MOORE

Thomas Moore, who was born twenty years before Hood and outlived him by seven, achieved during his lifetime an exaggerated reputation and success that were in themselves romantic. For *Lalla Rookh*, which actually placed him momentarily on the level of Byron and Scott, he received £3000 from his publishers ! But his fame spent itself almost as quickly as he spent the fortune it brought him, and the anxieties of his old age were relieved by a Civil List pension. *Lalla Rookh*, however, has a niche in the archives of romantic poetry, while some of his lyrics, such as *Oft in the Stilly Night*, *The Last Rose of Summer*, and others of the *Irish Melodies* which have been set to music by a whole tribe of composers during the last century, will survive. So also will his *Life of Byron*, which ranks among the best biographies ever given to the world.



## § 8

## WILLIAM BLAKE

William Blake was born in 1757 in London, where his father kept a draper's shop. He was brought up behind the counter, where, instead of giving up his heart to handling cravats and stockings, he drew sketches and scribbled verses on the backs of bills. From his youth he had curious visions, claiming to see God putting His head out of a window, angels perching in a tree, the prophet Ezekiel sitting under a green bough. In view of his artistic tastes he was apprenticed at fourteen to a wood-engraver, and in 1782 married a servant-girl who could not write her name, but who turned out one of the best wives that ever a man had. He was employed by Hayley, the poet, to illustrate his life of Cowper, and stayed for three years at his house at Felpham, where he used to wander out in the evening by the sea, meeting Moses and Dante, "grey, luminous, majestic, colossal shadows," and watching the funeral rites of fairies. On one occasion he painted Lot's portrait; on another he met the devil coming downstairs. His visions, as the years went by, became more and more strange—demi-gorgons, nightmares, enormous fish preying on dead bodies, the sea-serpent, angels pouring out the vials of plague, Furies scowling in the sun.

When we come to deal with his poetry, we find among much that is wild and whirling, and indeed sometimes unintelligible, verses of the sweetest beauty—verses which gave the eyes of men their first glimpse into that kingdom of romance in which Keats and Shelley were afterwards to wander and to dwell. Even in his first book, *Poetical Sketches*, which appeared in 1783, we have such lines as these from *The Evening Star* :

Smile on our loves ; and while thou drawest round  
The sky's blue curtains, scatter silver dew  
On every flower that closes its sweet eyes  
In timely sleep. Let thy west wind sleep on  
The lake : speak silence with thy glimmering eyes,  
And wash the dusk with silver.

None of the great after-poets of romance ever surpassed in loveliness these exquisitely cadenced and softly coloured lines.

In *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, which followed, we have his style of sweet and simple melody, limpid as a drop of dew, in the Introductory Verses :

Piping down the valleys wild,  
Piping songs of pleasant glee,  
On a cloud I saw a child,  
And he laughing said to me :

## THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

"Pipe a song about a lamb !"  
So I piped with merry cheer.  
"Piper, pipe that song again" ;  
So I piped : he wept to hear.

"Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe ;  
Sing thy songs of happy cheer !"  
So I sang the same again,  
While he wept with joy to hear.

"Piper, sit thee down and write  
In a book, that all may read" ;  
So he vanished from my sight,  
And I plucked a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,  
And I stained the water clear,  
And I wrote my happy songs  
Every child may joy to hear.

Here are some of the splendid verses to *The Tiger*, which perhaps are better known :

Tiger, tiger, burning bright  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry ?

In what distant deeps or skies  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes ?  
On what wings dare he aspire ?  
What the hand dare seize the fire ?

And what shoulder and what art  
Could twist the sinews of thy heart ?  
And, when thy heart began to beat,  
What dread hand and what dread feet ?

. . . . .  
When the stars threw down their spears,  
And watered heaven with their tears,  
Did He smile His work to see ?  
Did He who made the lamb make thee ?

A number of what we may call single bars of verbal music are to be found on almost every single page. Here is one from the *Cradle Song* :

Sleep ! Sleep ! In thy sleep  
Little sorrows sit and weep.



Alongside these simple (though often profound) lyrics one must set the vast "Prophetic Books," in which Blake the mystic symbolically set forth his visions of the principles which govern the world. Only in our own time, with its greater understanding of the irrational and non-material, have we begun to understand the truths which Blake discussed. His symbols remain confused and difficult, but in literature as in art he spoke with a new voice. His *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* anticipates such philosophy as Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*. His lyric "Jerusalem," which is part of his larger poem "Milton," set to the well-loved music of Parry, is probably one of the best-known songs in the language. Like Rossetti he is accepted as a master in both the realms of poetry and of painting; and we no longer dismiss as purely fantastic his supernormal visions.

Blake's life was as simple and yet as profoundly earnest as his poetry. He was content to live and die in poverty, happily married to one whom Swinburne called "the perfect wife." They resided for the most part in or about London, where he pursued his vocation of engraving his own works and others that appealed to him. Crabb Robinson, a contemporary diarist, gives an interesting glimpse of their life in his reminiscences :

On the 17th (Decr. 1825) I called on him in his house in Fountain Court in the Strand. The interview was a short one, and what I saw was more remarkable than what I heard. He was at work engraving in a small bedroom, light, and looking out on a mean yard—everything in the room squalid, & indicating poverty except himself. And there was a natural gentility about, & an insensibility to the seeming poverty which quite removed the impression. Besides, his linen was clean, his hand white & his air quite unembarrassed when he begged me to sit down, as if he were in a palace. There was but one chair in the room besides that on wh. he sat. On my putting my hand to it, I found that it would have fallen to pieces if I had lifted it. So, as if I had been a Sybarite, I said with a smile, 'Will you let me indulge myself?' And I sat on the bed and near him. . . . His wife (who survived him) was formed on the Miltonic model, & like the first wife, Eve, worshipped God in her husband, he being to her what God was to him.

He died in 1828, leaving a vast mass of drawings, and, it is said, a hundred volumes of poems in manuscript, all of which are lost.

## § 9

### WILLIAM COBBETT

William Cobbett, who was born in 1762, at the village of Farnham in Hampshire, was the son of a small publican and working farmer, himself

of long peasant descent. By no other has the finest side of the spirit of the decent English farmer and rustic been so perfectly expressed as by this hearty, energetic, self-educated writer. If it ever could be said of an author that he was racy of the soil, William Cobbett is that author. His restless energy and forceful tendency of mind showed themselves from his earliest youth. When, at eleven years old, he was working in the Bishop of Winchester's garden at Farnham Castle, he heard of the splendours of Kew. Immediately he set off on foot to London, and at Richmond spent his last threepence on a copy of Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, which he afterwards said provoked a new birth of his intellect. At twenty-one, on his way to Guildford Fair, he, with equal suddenness, decided to mount a passing coach to London. Then, for seventeen years, he never saw his native place. After a short spell in a lawyer's office he enlisted; and, as a private, studied English and French grammar, and practised writing, making himself one of the great masters of English. He left the army at twenty-nine, and soon produced one of his vigorous pamphlets; the first of a long series attacking public abuses.

The greater part of his writings and activities were essentially political, but it was the countryman writing and talking. All his utterances were prejudiced to a degree, but with that wholesome prejudice based, not on any convention, but on temperament and individual experience. Far more practically than Carlyle, he loathed every sort of cant, and he showed this full as much in his personal life as in everything he said and wrote.

His two principal country books, in the stricter sense, are *Rural Rides* and *Cottage Economy*, although he also wrote several books on gardening and the management of woodlands, and much country description distributed through his mainly political works. *Rural Rides* is a journal of horseback tours through almost every part of England, but especially through Surrey, Sussex, and Hampshire, made by Cobbett between his fifty-eighth and seventieth years. It includes magnificent descriptions of typical country scenery; shrewd commentaries on agricultural conditions, political asides suggested by things he saw; and criticisms, eulogistic, friendly, and contemptuous, of individuals encountered on his rides. It is one of the heartiest and most vivid books in the language.

## READING LIST

### WORDSWORTH:

*The Oxford Wordsworth.* Complete Poetical Works, edited in one volume by Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford University Press).

*Wordsworth's Shorter Poems.* Everyman's Library (Dent).

*Wordsworth's Longer Poems.* Everyman's Library (Dent).



WORDSWORTH, COLERIDGE, SOUTHEY, AND BLAKE

*Poems of Wordsworth.* Chosen and edited by Matthew Arnold. Golden Treasury Series (Macmillan).

*Wordsworth.* By F. W. H. Myers. English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

*Wordsworth.* By Sir Walter Raleigh (Arnold).

COLERIDGE :

*Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* Edited by Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Oxford University Press).

*Poems.* Introduction by Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch. The World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

*Aids to Reflection and the Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit.* Bohn's Library (G. Bell).

*Coleridge's Table Talk and Omniana.* Arranged and edited by T. Ashe, B.A., Bohn's Library (G. Bell).

*Coleridge.* By H. D. Traill. English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* By Sir E. K. Chambers (Oxford University Press).

*The Road to Xanadu* (literary criticism). By John Livingston Lowes (Constable).

SOUTHEY :

*Life of Nelson.* Oxford Standard Authors (Oxford University Press).

*Poems.* Chosen and arranged by Professor E. Dowden (Macmillan).

*Southey.* Professor E. Dowden. English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

LANDOR, WALTER SAVAGE :

*Works,* edited by T. Earle Welby (Chapman & Hall) ; *Imaginary Conversations* (World's Classics ; with selected poems, Everyman's).

HOOD :

*Thomas Hood's Choice Works* (Chatto & Windus).

MOORE :

*Poetical Works of Thomas Moore.* Edited by A. D. Godley (Oxford University Press).

*Irish Melodies.* With Introduction by Stephen Gwynn (M. H. Gill).

*Moore.* By Stephen Gwynn. English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

BLAKE :

*Poetical Sketches,* with essays by Jack Lindsay and Eric Partridge (Scholartis Press).

*Songs of Innocence and other Poems.* Oxford Moment Series (Oxford University Press).

## THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

*Selections from Symbolical Poems.* Edited by Frederick E. Pierce (Oxford University Press).

*Poetical Works.* With a Memoir by W. M. Rossetti. Bohn's Popular Library (G. Bell).

The edition in the Oxford Poets.

*Introduction to the Study of Blake*, by Max Plowman (Dent).

*The Man without a Mask*, by J. Bronowski. A study of Blake from a materialist scientific viewpoint.

*English Blake*, by Bernard Blackstone (Cambridge University Press.)

### COBBETT :

*Advice to Young Men* (Oxford University Press).

*Rural Rides.* 2 vols. Everyman's Library (Dent).

*Selections from Cobbett.* With Essays by Hazlitt and others, and Introduction and Notes by A. M. D. Hughes. Clarendon English Series (Oxford University Press).

Much the best anthology of romantic poetry is *The Oxford Book of English Verse of the Romantic Period*, edited by Sir Humphrey Milford (Oxford University Press); and romantic literature is brilliantly treated by C. H. Herford in *The Age of Wordsworth* (Bell); another work of the first order is Oliver Elton's *Survey of English Literature : 1780-1830* (Arnold).



## XXVI

## BYRON, SHELLEY, KEATS

## § I

## BYRON

"Byron issues from the sea-waves ever fresh."—GOETHE.

IN Byron we meet a poet whose personality, history, and character place him apart from other English poets of his own or any age. George Gordon Byron, sixth lord (1788–1824), came of a line of Byrons, or Burons, which stretched back to the Conquest. It was a race of fighters. Seven Byrons fought for their king at Edgehill. The first Lord Byron defended Newark and lost all his fortune in the royal cause. We may come at once to the fifth lord, William, whom, as his grand-nephew, the poet succeeded. His wild character won him the name of "the wicked lord." In 1765 he was tried before the House of Lords for killing in a duel, fought in a locked tavern room in Pall Mall, by the light of one candle, his cousin, Mr. Chaworth, after a quarrel that was so frivolous as to indicate a deeper origin. Exempted from punishment by his privilege as a peer, he retired to his estate, Newstead Abbey, under a lasting cloud. He died childless in 1798, having taken no interest at all in his heir, the future poet, to whom he used to refer as "the little boy who lives at Aberdeen"—the grandson of his brother, Admiral John Byron ("Foul-weather Jack").

Byron's father was John Byron, a captain in the army, who married Catherine Gordon of Gight, as his second wife, was as untameable as his "wicked" uncle, and earned the name of "Mad Jack." His wife's property, which was considerable, fell into his hands and quickly disappeared in his dissipation. After their marriage in 1785 he took her to France, whence they soon returned, and their only child, George Gordon, was born in Holles Street, Oxford Street, London, on January 22, 1788. Some trouble in childbirth caused a malformation in one of his feet, which was examined and prescribed for by the great John Hunter, but no complete cure was effected, and, although the poet's head and features were of compelling beauty, this crippled state remained to be one of his lifelong embitterments.

When John Byron fled from his creditors to France in 1791, where he died in the same year, Mrs. Byron took her child to Aberdeen, where she

had to live on the small remnant of her means, amounting to £150 a year.

Such, in brief, were the sources of Byron's blood and the circumstances of his early childhood. His grand-uncle, the fifth lord, died in 1798, when Byron was ten years old. His heavily mortgaged and neglected estate passed into the hands of trustees, and the boy became a ward in Chancery under the guardianship of Lord Carlisle. He was sent to Dr. Glennie's school at Dulwich, whence he passed to Harrow in 1801. The headmaster, Dr. Joseph Drury, found him backward and intractable, but with something in him which caused him to say to Lord Carlisle: "He has talents, my lord, which will add lustre to his rank." Idle and slow to learn, Byron was already a precocious reader. He was pugnacious, generous, and extremely proud of his rank. His Harrow friendships, the chief of which was with Lord Clare, he afterwards described as "passions." Even before he left Harrow he had fallen madly in love with his young kinswoman, Mary Chaworth, who, however, scorned him. Byron saw her after her marriage, which was unhappy, and took the farewell which is reflected in his lines, written in his sixteenth year: *Ah, Memory torture me no more.*

In the autumn of 1805 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, a young nobleman. Despite his slight lameness, he rowed, boxed, and became an adept with the pistol. Meanwhile his capricious and wild-tempered mother did much to disorder his character, and nothing to form it. Emotional crises, one after another, distorted his outlook on life. Already he was pouring out the poems which, at the age of nineteen, he published under the title *Hours of Idleness*. Few have merit, and few show promise of aught but trouble to a youth who, at this age, could write:

Weary of love, devoured with spleen,  
I rest, a perfect Timon, at nineteen.

The butterfly was broken on the wheel of the *Edinburgh Review*, probably by Brougham, though Byron at first attributed the review to Jeffrey. Stung to the quick, he sat down to write the first of his poems that became famous, his free-hitting satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. He laid about him without fear or scruple. In this poem he began his long vendetta with Southey—"God help thee, Southey, and thy readers, too." To Wordsworth he alludes as one

Who both, by precept and example, shows  
That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose.

But later, on meeting Wordsworth, and being asked by Lady Byron how the young poet had got on with the old one, he confessed that his whole



feeling had been one of reverence. He never allowed the satire to be republished.

In the autumn of 1808 he started on a "grand tour" with his friend John Cam Hobhouse. They sailed for Lisbon, and thence travelled to Seville, Cadiz, Gibraltar, Sardinia, Malta, Albania, and to Greece, where he visited Missolonghi, little dreaming that he would die there fifteen years later. It was in Athens that his love of the beautiful and innocent daughter of his hostess inspired one of the best of his lyrics: *Maid of Athens*.

Maid of Athens, ere we part,  
Give, oh, give me back my heart !  
Or, since that has left my breast,  
Keep it now, and take the rest !  
Hear my vow before I go,  
*Zoe mou, sas agapo.*<sup>1</sup>

By those tresses unconfin'd  
Woo'd by each Ægean wind ;  
By those lids whose jetty fringe  
Kiss thy soft cheeks' blooming tinge ;  
By those wild eyes like the roe,  
*Zoe mou, sas agapo.*

By that lip I long to taste ;  
By that zone-encircled waist ;  
By all the token-flowers that tell  
What words can never speak so well ;  
By love's alternate joy and woe,  
*Zoe mou, sas agapo.*

Maid of Athens ! I am gone ;  
Think of me, sweet ! when alone.  
Though I fly to Istambol,  
Athens holds my heart and soul.  
Can I cease to love thee ? No !  
*Zoe mou, sas agapo.*

While returning to England in 1811 he heard of his mother's illness, and he never again saw her alive. He settled in St. James's Street, in a house which was demolished in the spring of 1923. From its door he drove with his friend Dallas to take his seat—which he did very awkwardly and in a mood of disdain—in the House of Lords. Here he was living when his first two cantos of *Childe Harold* lifted him into dazzling fame in a single day. They were published by John Murray the Second, at 32 Fleet Street, and at once set literary London aflame with wonder and admiration.

<sup>1</sup> My life, I love you.

Moore tells of Byron's table being strewn with letters from statesmen, great ladies, and unknown admirers.

Nothing like *Childe Harold* had been known. Moore had told Byron that he feared the poem was too good for its age. But, as John Nichol says (*Byron, English Men of Letters Series*): "Its success was due to the reverse being the truth. It was just on the level of its age." Men and women who professed they could not read Wordsworth, Coleridge, or Southey, rushed to enjoy the fire and flow of *Childe Harold*.

## § 2

Byron was now fairly under way. In the next four years he poured out those oriental narrative poems to which he could bring not only white lava-like feeling but personal knowledge of scene and character. In 1813 came *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos*; in 1814, *The Corsair* and *Lara*; in 1816, *The Siege of Corinth*, *Parasina*, and *The Prisoner of Chillon*. He wrote them all at a heat. He wrote *The Corsair* in ten days, pacing up and down Albemarle Street at night. "*Lara* I wrote while undressing after coming home from balls and masquerades, in the year of revelry 1814." *The Bride* was thrown off in four days. Recounting these feats he remarked, "This I take to be a humiliating confession, as it proves my want of judgment in publishing, and the public in reading, things which cannot have stamina or permanence." But although time has somewhat confirmed, it has more largely reversed this self-judgment. As Matthew Arnold says, "The producer of such poems could not but publish them, the public could not but read them. Nor could Byron have produced his work in any other fashion. . . . He wrote, as he truly tells us, to relieve himself, and he went on writing because he found the relief indispensable." These narratives—*The Corsair* may be partly excepted—were lacking in unity and continuity of plot. Byron justly described *The Giaour* as "a string of passages." But, says Arnold again, "he had a wonderful power of conceiving a single incident, a single situation; of throwing himself upon it, grasping it as if it were real and he saw and felt it, and of making us see and feel it too." And a great wind of freedom blew through it all, and blows to this day. Are we yet either so emancipated or so enchained, as to be able to read without a thrill the opening lines of *The Corsair*?

O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,  
Our thoughts are boundless, and our souls as free,  
Far as the breeze can hear, the billows foam,  
Survey our empire, and behold our home!  
These are our realms, no limits to their sway—  
Our flag the sceptre all who meet obey.



Ours the wild life in tumult still to range  
 From toil to rest, and joy in every change.  
 Oh, who can tell? not thou, luxurious slave!  
 Whose soul would sicken o'er the heaving wave;  
 Not thou, vain lord of wantonness and ease!  
 Whom slumber soothes not—pleasure cannot please—  
 Oh, who can tell, save he whose heart hath tried,  
 And danced in triumph o'er the waters wide,  
 The exulting sense—the pulse's maddening play,  
 That thrills the wanderer of that trackless way!  
 That for itself can woo the approaching fight,  
 And turn what seems a danger to delight;  
 That seeks what cravens shun with more than zeal,  
 And when the feeble faint—can only feel—  
 Feel—to the rising bosoms inmost core,  
 If hope awaken and its spirit soar?

Weakly constructed, and falsely sentimental, as these poems may be, they contain passages which stir the blood, and a cry for liberation and justice and the play of human nature to which our hearts must still respond. Byron struck a chord which made a common chord tremble, and it need not surprise us that 14,000 copies of *The Corsair* were sold in one day. He had taught tens of thousands of people, who had never read poetry, to read such poetry as his with rapture. Undoubtedly it is often unfinished, and seldom exquisite, but his sweep of movement, his sovereign ease, his air of expressing himself, not as a writer, but as a man, carry us away again and again. Arnold complains of the want of sequence in that famous passage in *The Giaour*, "He who hath bent him o'er the dead," but he does not fail to give these lines to us in his selections of the best of Byron's poetry:

He who hath bent him o'er the dead  
 Ere the first day of death is fled,  
 The first dark day of nothingness,  
 The last of danger and distress  
 (Before Decay's effacing fingers  
 Have swept the lines where beauty lingers),  
 And mark'd the mild angelic air,  
 The rapture of repose that's there,  
 The fix'd yet tender traits that streak  
 The languor of the placid cheek,  
 And—but for that sad and shrouded eye,  
     That fires not, wins not, weeps not, now,  
     And but for that chill, changeless brow,  
     When cold Obstruction's apathy  
 Appals the gazing mourner's heart,  
 As if to him it could impart

The doom he dreads, yet dwells upon ;  
 Yes, but for these and these alone,  
 Some moments, ay, one treacherous hour,  
 He still might doubt the tyrant's power ;  
 So fair, so calm, so softly seal'd,  
 The first, last look by death reveal'd !  
 Such is the aspect of this shore ;  
 'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more.

Byron reigned by the magnetism of his personality, by the torrential force of his rhetoric, and by the freshness and variety of his material. As George Saintsbury says (*A Short History of English Literature*), he brought into English poetry "a vast and valuable stock of new imagery, new properties, new scenery and decoration. . . . Always he has the merit of changing the scenes, the characters, the temper of English poetry, of at least apparently widening its scope, of giving a dash of the continental, the cosmopolitan, to vary our insularity and particularism." Above all he was a poet of revolt, with the courage of revolt. His appeal to the young has no doubt abated since he turned the heads of the youth of the Regency period, but he remains, even in this narrow category, the chief of the English-writing poets who may be described as *awakeners* of the poetic sense. It is true that a great reaction set in after his death, and that Carlyle did not see how his fame was to endure because "no genuine productive thought was ever revealed by him to mankind." But if he did not add much to the sum of human thought he has taught millions to think and feel. Arnold's judgment has shortened the range of Carlyle's :

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,  
 We bow'd our head and held our breath.  
 He taught us little ; but our soul  
 Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.

Byron has always been *felt* in this way, and it is impossible to read again his best passages without understanding and sharing the spell which he threw over his generation in this country and in Europe. Swinburne, who, of all the later critics, had reason to be offended by Byron's want of finished art, defined his supreme quality as "the excellence of sincerity and strength." It is assuredly some excellence of sincerity and strength that young hearts discover in Byron—in *Childe Harold*, in *The Corsair*, in *The Siege of Corinth*, and in lines like these :

The mountains look on Marathon—  
 And Marathon looks on the sea ;  
 And musing there an hour alone,  
 I dream'd that Greece might still be free ;  
 For standing on the Persian's grave  
 I could not deem myself a slave.



A king sate on the rocky brow  
That looks o'er sea-born Salamis ;  
And ships, by thousands, lay below,  
And men in nations ;—all were his !  
He counted them at break of day—  
And when the sun was set where were they ?

And where are they ? and where art thou,  
My country ? On thy voiceless shore  
The heroic lay is tuneless now—  
The heroic bosom beats no more.  
And must thy lyre, so long divine,  
Degenerate into hands like mine ?

'Tis something, in the dearth of fame,  
Though link'd among a fetter'd race,  
To feel at least a patriot's shame,  
Even as I sing, suffuse my face ;  
For what is left the poet here ?  
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

Must *we* but weep o'er days more blest ?  
Must *we* but blush ?—Our fathers bled.  
Earth ! render back from out thy breast  
A remnant of our Spartan dead !  
Of three hundred grant but three,  
To make a new Thermopylæ.

§ 3

We must refer, though briefly, to the great crisis in Byron's career which was at once his doom and inspiration after the first *Childe Harold* period. The story of his disastrous marriage to Miss Milbanke, of his failure as a married man, of the still unsolved mystery of their separation, accompanied by the crash of Byron's social reputation, and followed by his departure from England, never to return, is too vexed and complicated to be detailed here. A discussion which cannot be ended had here better not be begun. The London world turned against its hero and darling, vindictively, mercilessly. Byron himself tells us : " The press was active and scurrilous . . . my name—which had been a knightly or a noble one since William the Norman—was tainted. I felt that, if what was whispered and muttered and murmured was true, I was unfit for England ; if false, England was unfit for me." He landed at Ostend in April 1816, and began to " bear through Europe the pageant of his bleeding heart."

The first two cantos of *Childe Harold* were published in 1812, and they belong therefore to Byron's early period ; the third and fourth were the first expressions of his *inflamed* genius. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has asked his Cambridge students to compare these two portions. "Who can fail to perceive the sudden deepening of the voice to sincerity, the as sudden lift to music and imagination?" At once he finds a subject, and great words for it, in the field of Waterloo, where less than a year before the master of Europe had become the jest of fame. Everyone knows those splendid lines, but one is glad that Sir Arthur quotes the stanza which in anthologies and "reciters" is so often cut off, the beautiful tribute to Frederick Howard, who fell in the late evening of the battle-day when charging the French with his hussars :

There have been tears and breaking hearts for thee,  
 And mine were nothing, had I such to give ;  
 But when I stood beneath the fresh green tree,  
 Which living waves where thou didst cease to live,  
 And saw around me the wide field revive  
 With fruits and fertile promise, and the Spring  
 Come forth her work of gladness to contrive,  
*With all her reckless birds upon the wing,*  
 I turned from all she brought to those she could not bring.

The line italicised is a supremely fine expression of the energy, the liberty, and movement of nature.

Nor can one argue with those who deny the name of great poetry to the stanza on the dying gladiator in the Coliseum, to whose ears, half sealed in his last agony, came the "inhuman shout" which hailed the victor :

He heard it, but he heeded not—his eyes  
 Were with his heart—and that was far away ;  
 He recked not of the life he lost nor prize,  
 But where his rude hut by the Danube lay,  
 There were his young barbarians all at play.  
 There was their Dacian mother—he, their sire,  
 Butcher'd to make a Roman holiday—  
 All this rush'd with his blood—Shall he expire  
 And unavenged ? Arise ! ye Goths, and glut your ire !

#### § 4

But the real, the most puissant Byron is found in *Don Juan*. This epic abounds in every kind of literary material : wit, satire, description, characterisation, self-communing, accusation, dreaming. As a piece of gay description take the pirate Lambro's return to his island, where he finds



the shipwrecked Don Juan and his daughter Haidée rejoicing in their young love among his dancing domestics.

He saw his white walls shining in the sun,  
His garden trees all shadowy and green ;  
He heard his rivulet's light bubbling run,  
The distant dog-bark ; and perceived between  
The umbrage of the wood, so cool and dun,  
The moving figures, and the sparkling sheen  
Of arms (in the East all arm)—and various dyes,  
Of coloured garbs, as bright as butterflies.

And further on a group of Grecian girls,  
The first and tallest her white kerchief waving,  
Were strung together like a row of pearls,  
Linked hand in hand, and dancing ; each too having  
Down her white neck long floating auburn curls—  
(The least of which would set ten poets raving) ;  
Their leader sang—and bounded to her song  
With choral step and voice the virgin throng.

And here, assembled cross-legg'd round their trays,  
Small social parties just begun to dine ;  
Pilaus and meats of all sorts met the gaze,  
And flasks of Samian and of Chian wine,  
And sherbet cooling in the porous vase ;  
Above them their dessert grew on its vine ;  
The orange and pomegranate nodding o'er,  
Dropped in their laps, scarce plucked, their mellow store.

Contrast with this the awesome opening stanza of the description of the shipwreck :

'Twas twilight, and the sunless day went down  
Over the waste of waters ; like a veil,  
Which, if withdrawn, would but disclose the frown  
Of one whose hate is mask'd but to assail.  
Thus to their hopeless eyes the night was shown,  
And grimly darkled o'er the faces pale,  
And the dim desolate sleep ; twelve days had Fear  
Been their familiar, and now Death was here.

Or take again that sudden hymnal outburst :

Ave Maria ! blessed be the hour !  
The time, the clime, the spot, where I so oft  
Have felt that moment in its fullest power  
Sink o'er the earth so beautiful and soft  
While swung the deep bell in the distant tower.

Ave Maria ! 'tis the hour of prayer !  
 Ave Maria ! 'tis the hour of love !  
 Ave Maria ! may our spirits dare  
 Look up to thine and to thy Son's above !  
 Ave Maria ! oh, that face so fair !  
 Those downcast eyes beneath the Almighty dove—  
 What though 'tis but a pictured image ?—strike—  
 That painting is no idol—'tis too like.

Sweet hour of twilight !—in the solitude  
 Of the pine forest, and the silent shore  
 Which bounds Ravenna's immemorial wood,  
 Rooted where once the Adrian wave flowed o'er,  
 To where the last Cæsarian fortress stood,  
 Evergreen forest ! which Boccaccio's lore  
 And Dryden's lay made haunted ground to me,  
 How have I loved the twilight hour and thee !

In his pictures of nature Byron is magnificent on the ordinary plane of sight and feeling ; this it is which makes him the awakener of youth and the delight of tired men. With him the effect is always instant, intelligible, and sensuous. Very frequently indeed he parts with exalted feeling only to achieve a more masterful power. What could be finer in its casual, sketchy truthfulness than the description of the plain of Troy (in *Don Juan*), as he really saw it ?

Nothing in his personal life became Byron like his end when he took up arms for Greece in the War of Greek Independence, and his over-lived life ended in fever at Missolonghi on April 19, 1824. It is impossible to say what manner of man or what different manner of poet he would have become had he not died at thirty-seven. Stopford Brooke believed that his last great act, his sacrifice of his time, his money, and his life for Greece, would have marked a deep change. "Byron did not reach manhood in this world, the manhood which has learned self-restraint for the sake of high purposes. He was entering it when he died." Let us rather say he had entered it when he wrote his last lines at Missolonghi :

Awake ! (not Greece—she *is* awake !)  
 Awake, my spirit ! Think through *whom*  
 Their life-blood tracks its parent-lake,  
 And then strike home !  
 Tread those reviving passions down,  
 Unworthy manhood !—unto thee  
 Indifferent should the smile or frown  
 Of beauty be.



BYRON, SHELLEY, KEATS

If thou regret'st thy youth, *why live?*  
The land of honourable death  
Is here :—up to the field, and give  
Away thy breath.

*Seek out—less often sought than found—  
A soldier's grave, for thee the best ;  
Then look around, and choose thy ground,  
And take thy rest.*

Thus ended Childe Harold's last pilgrimage. If his wishes had been allowed to rule the manner of Byron's burial, he would not have been brought home, to be buried like a country magnate in the heart of England. On some lonely Ægean isle, or on some Grecian promontory, amid the murmur of the waves, his tomb would have recalled to every pilgrim his majestic verse :

Between two worlds Life hovers like a star,  
'Twixt Night and Morn, upon the horizon's verge.  
How little do we know that which we are !  
How less what we may be ! The eternal surge  
Of Time and Tide rolls on and bears afar  
Our bubbles ; as the old burst, new emerge,  
Lashed from the foam of ages ; while the graves  
Of Empires heave but like some passing waves.

But Byron's remains were brought to England—to be refused burial in Westminster Abbey, and to be laid in the family vault at Hucknall Torkard, a mile or two from Newstead Abbey, amid the scenes which had witnessed his pure, boyish passion for Mary Chaworth.

§ 5

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Shelley stands alone among the singers of the ages. He owned no master and left no disciple. The music which he "swept from the wild harp of time" came with a new sound on the world's ear, and no minstrel ever caught its melody again.

He was born in 1792, at Horsham, the eldest son of a country squire, a man of ancient and distinguished race, but a strange progenitor for a poet so ethereal. From the first the boy, beautiful as an angel and as tender-hearted, tremblingly alive in every fibre, strung like a wind-harp to the breath of every breeze, seemed like a being from another sphere. The

sight of pain or sorrow turned him sick with rage and pity. At Eton—to him “a world of tyrants and of fops”—where he struck a penknife through a bully’s hand, he gained the title of Mad Shelley. And mad indeed he may be called :

If mad it is to be unlike the world.

In due course he went to Oxford. There he put forth a pamphlet of two pages on the Necessity of Atheism. The authorities, without argument, expelled him promptly. Yet the University has, in recent years, set up his statue, and so claimed him, with some irony, among her cherished sons.

Two years later a pretty, empty-headed schoolgirl fell in love with him, declared she could not live without him, and they eloped together. Such a union could not last. They separated and Shelley married again. His second wife was Mary Godwin, afterwards the author of *Frankenstein*. They settled in Italy, where nearly all his chief poems were written and from which he was never to return.

During all this time he had been writing. But, strange to say, his early poems and his wild romances showed not only no distinction, but no promise. *Queen Mab* was something better ; *Alastor*, better still ; and in the long poem *The Revolt of Islam*, and above all in the Dedication to his wife, we hear the Shelley note in its perfection :

So now my summer-task is ended, Mary,  
And I return to thee, my own heart’s home,  
As to his Queen some victor knight of Faery,  
Earning bright spoils for her enchanted dome.

At Venice he met Byron. In the splendid poem *Julian and Maddalo* (Shelley and Byron) he threw a vivid light upon his brother-poet.

The sense that he was greater than his kind  
Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind  
By gazing on its own exceeding light.

It is a fact that Shelley looked up to Byron as to a superior being. But all his life he suffered from illusions. He had also a strange liking for the verse of Southey—much as the Fairy Queen stuck roses in the head of Bottom.

It was while staying at Byron’s villa at Este that he began, in 1818, the vast poetic drama, *Prometheus Unbound*—a work that in sheer lyric power and splendour has no parallel in any language. Æschylus, after his play *Prometheus Bound*, left a sequel, *Prometheus Unbound*, which the world has lost. Shelley’s drama supplies its place, though it bears but slight resemblance to a work of the Greek stage. As in Æschylus, his Prometheus, as the friend of man, is chained by Zeus upon the mountain crag. But now he



writhes in fierier torment than the eagle's beak. Swarms of black vampire-demons hang about him, bringing him visions of the dire calamities which, throughout the ages, the race of man is fated to endure. But when the Furies leave him, missions of choral spirits, sea-nymphs, echoes, sing him songs of consolation, filling the air, and all the play, with their enchanted music, or with continual syllables of dulcet speech. Here is the first soliloquy of Prometheus, spoken in solitude upon his peak :

I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt ?  
 I ask you Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,  
 Has it not seen ? The Sea, in storm or calm,  
 Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below,  
 Have its deaf waves not heard my agony ?  
 Ah me ! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever !  
 The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears  
 Of their moon-freezing crystals ; the bright chains  
 Eat with their burning cold into my bones.  
 Heaven's winged hound, polluting from thy lips  
 His beak in poison not his own, tears up  
 My heart ; and shapeless sights come wandering by,  
 The ghastly people of the realm of dream,  
 Mocking me : and the Earthquake-fiends are charged  
 To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds  
 When the rocks split and close again behind :  
 While from their loud abysses howling throng  
 The genii of the storm, urging the rage  
 Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.  
 And yet to me welcome is day and night,  
 Whether one breaks the hoar-frost of the morn,  
 Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs  
 The leaden-coloured east.

Here is a spirit-song, which seems to fall from heaven in music, " sweet as a singing rain of silver dew " :

On a poet's lips I slept  
 Dreaming like a love-adept  
 In the sound his breathing kept ;  
 Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,  
 But feeds on the æreal kisses,  
 Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.  
 He will watch from dawn to gloom  
 The lake-reflected sun illumine  
 The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,  
 Nor heed nor see, what things they be ;  
 But from these create he can  
 Forms more real than living man,  
 Nurslings of immortality !

After *Prometheus* came another play, *The Cenci*—this time a drama of real life. No idea of the power and splendour of the work can be given in this place, any more than *Hamlet* could be summed up in a paragraph.

*The Witch of Atlas* is an enchanted fairy-tale. Strange and wild are the adventures of the lovely witch, a kind of child of Ariel, who dwelt beside a fountain in a mountain cave :

A lovely lady garmented in light  
 From her own beauty—deep her eyes, as are  
 Two openings of unfathomable night  
 Seen through a temple's cloven roof—her hair  
 Dark—the dim brain whirls dizzy with delight,  
 Picturing her form ; her soft smiles shone afar,  
 And her low voice was heard like love, and drew  
 All living things towards this wonder new.

And first the spotted cameleopard came,  
 And then the wise and fearless elephant  
 Then the sly serpent, in the golden flame  
 Of his own volumes interwolved ;—all gaunt  
 And sanguine beasts her gentle looks made tame.  
 They drank before her at her sacred fount ;  
 And every beast of beating heart grew bold,  
 Such gentleness and power even to behold.

The brinded lioness led forth her young,  
 That she might teach them how they should forego  
 Their inborn thirst of death ; the pard unstrung  
 His sinews at her feet, and sought to know  
 With looks whose motions spoke without a tongue  
 How he might be as gentle as the doe.  
 The magic circle of her voice and eyes  
 All savage natures did imparadise.

And old Silenus, shaking a green stick  
 Of lilies, and the wood-gods in a crew  
 Came blithe as in the olive copses thick  
 Cicadæ are, drunk with the noonday dew :  
 And Dryope and Faunus followed quick,  
 Teasing the god to sing them something new ;  
 Till in this cave they found the lady lone,  
 Sitting upon a seat of emerald stone.

Here is a description of her magic vessel :

She had a boat, which some say Vulcan wrought  
 For Venus, as the chariot of her star ;  
 But it was found too feeble to be fraught  
 With all the ardours in that sphere which are,



And so she sold it, and Apollo bought  
 And gave it to his daughter : from a car  
 Changed to the fairest and the lightest boat  
 Which ever upon mortal stream did float.

And down the streams which clove those mountains vast,  
 Around their inland islets, and amid  
 The panther-peopled forests, whose shade cast  
 Darkness and odours, and a pleasure hid  
 In melancholy gloom, the pinnacle passed ;  
 By many a star-surrounded pyramid  
 Of icy crag cleaving the purple sky,  
 And caverns yawning round unfathomably.

The silver noon into that winding dell,  
 With slanted gleam athwart the forest tops,  
 Tempered like golden evening, feebly fell ;  
 A green and glowing light, like that which drops  
 From folded lilies in which glow-worms dwell,  
 When Earth over her face Night's mantle wraps ;  
 Between the severed mountains lay on high,  
 Over the stream, a narrow rift of sky.

## § 6

Then came the great romance of Shelley's life—his love for Emilia Viviani. She was a lovely girl, with the shape of a Greek statue, and with its marble pallor, her dark hair wreathed Greek-fashion, and with large sleepy eyes that could awake to fiery passion. She had been shut up in a convent by her father until she would consent to wed a suitor of his choice. There Shelley saw her, pitied her sad lot, and made unavailing efforts to secure her freedom. A wild, electric, yet ideal passion sprang up between them—a passion which in *Epipsychidion*—"a poem on the soul"—he enshrined as if in syllables of imperishable fire. In the concluding lines—which we will quote in part—he dreams, as many a lover has before him, of flying with his love to some fair land, far from the world of men :

Emily,

A ship is floating in the harbour now,  
 A wind is hovering o'er the mountain's brow.  
 There is a path on the sea's azure floor,—  
 No keel has ever ploughed that path before ;  
 The halcyons brood around the foamless isles :  
 The treacherous ocean has forsworn its wiles ;

The merry mariners are bold and free :  
 Say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me ?  
 Our bark is as an albatross whose nest  
 Is a far Eden of the purple east ;  
 It is an isle under Ionian skies,  
 Beautiful as a wreck of paradise ;  
 The blue Ægean girds this chosen home,  
 With ever-changing sound and light and foam.

But the chief marvel of the wilderness  
 Is a lone dwelling, built by whom or how  
 None of the rustic island-people know.  
 'Tis not a tower of strength, though with its height  
 It overtops the woods ; but, for delight,  
 Some wise and tender ocean-king, ere crime  
 Had been invented in the world's young prime,  
 Reared it, a wonder of that simple time.  
 This isle and house are mine, and I have vowed  
 Thee to be lady of the solitude.  
 And we will talk, until thought's melody  
 Become too sweet for utterance, and it die  
 In words to live again in looks, which dart  
 With thrilling tone into the voiceless heart,  
 And our veins beat together ; and our lips,  
 With other eloquence than words, eclipse  
 The soul that burns between them ; and the wells  
 Which boil under our being's inmost cells,  
 The fountains of our deepest life, shall be  
 Confused in passion's golden purity,  
 As mountain-springs under the morning sun.  
 We shall become the same, we shall be one,  
 One hope within two wills, one will beneath  
 Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,  
 One heaven, one hell, one immortality,  
 And one annihilation !

Woe is me !

The wingèd words on which my soul would pierce  
 Into the height of Love's rare universe  
 Are chains of lead around its flight of fire—  
 I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire !

In the year following, 1821, Keats died, and Shelley wrote the great elegy of *Adonais* :

Oh, weep for Adonais—he is dead !  
 Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep !  
 Yet wherefore ? Quench within their burning bed  
 Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep



Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep ;  
 For he is gone, where all things wise and fair  
 Descend ;—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep  
 Will yet restore him to the vital air ;  
 Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

Shelley was under the impression, as Byron was, that Keats had been killed by the critics. The impression was an error, but Shelley's retaliation is a superb piece of invective :

The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn ;  
 He sets, and each ephemeral insect then  
 Is gathered into death without a dawn,  
 And the immortal stars awake again ;  
 So is it in the world of living men :  
 A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight  
 Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when  
 It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light  
 Leave to its kindred lamps the spirits' awful night.

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame !  
 Live ! fear no heavier chastisement from me,  
 Thou noteless blot on a remembered name !  
 But be thyself and know thyself to be !  
 And ever at thy season be thou free  
 To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow :  
 Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee ;  
 Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,  
 And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now.

Nor must we fail to note the gorgeous lines :

The One remains, the many change and pass ;  
 Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly,  
 Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,  
 Stains the white radiance of Eternity.

Shelley himself thought *Adonais* the best thing he had written. " I confess," he said, " I should be surprised if *that* poem were born to an eternity of oblivion." It may be noted that, during his own lifetime, none of his poems sold a hundred copies, and many not a single one.

We must now consider Shelley's songs and lyrics. We will take only such as can be quoted complete, for to take portions of *The Skylark*, *The Cloud*, *The West Wind*, and so on, is to ruin the effect which the poet had in mind. It is first to be observed that Shelley had two styles, quite different

styles, the gorgeous and the simple. Of the first, let us take *To Night*, a most Shelley-like example :

Swiftly walk over the western wave,  
 Spirit of Night !  
 Out of the misty eastern cave  
 Where, all the long and lone daylight,  
 Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear  
 Which make thee terrible and dear,  
 Swift be thy flight !  
 Wrap thy form in a mantle grey,  
 Star-inwrought,  
 Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day ;  
 Kiss her until she be wearied out.  
 Then wander o'er city and sea and land  
 Touching all with thine opiate wand—  
 Come, long-sought !

When I arose and saw the dawn  
 I sighed for thee ;  
 When light rode high, and the dew was gone,  
 And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,  
 And the weary Day turned to her rest,  
 Lingered like an unloved guest,  
 I sighed for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried,  
 " Wouldst thou me ? "  
 Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,  
 Murmured like a noontide bee,  
 " Shall I nestle near thy side ?  
 Wouldst thou me ? "—And I replied,  
 " No, not thee."

Death will come when thou art dead,  
 Soon, too soon—  
 Sleep will come when thou art fled,  
 Of neither would I ask the boon  
 I ask of thee, beloved Night—  
 Swift be thine approaching flight,  
 Come soon, soon !

Compare the style of this with *Ozymandias*, in its sublime simplicity :

I met a traveller from an antique land  
 Who said : Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
 Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,  
 Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,



And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed :  
And on the pedestal these words appear :  
" My name is Ozymandias, king of kings :  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair ! "  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Shelley is, of course, one of the world's supreme song-writers. Here are two examples which are worthy of the greatest of the Elizabethans :

(1)

The fountains mingle with the river  
And the rivers with the ocean,  
The winds of heaven mix for ever  
With a sweet emotion ;  
Nothing in the world is single ;  
All things by a law divine  
In one another's being mingle.  
Why not I with thine ?—

See the mountains kiss high heaven  
And the waves clasp one another  
No sister-flower would be forgiven  
If it disdained its brother ;  
And the sunlight clasps the earth  
And the moonbeams kiss the sea :  
What are all these kissings worth  
If thou kiss not me ?

(2)

Music, when soft voices die,  
Vibrates in the memory—  
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,  
Live within the sense they quicken.  
Rose-leaves, when the rose is dead,  
Are heaped for the beloved's bed ;  
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,  
Love itself shall slumber on.

§ 7

Some mention must be made of Shelley's prose. Matthew Arnold thought that his prose-writings " would resist the wear and tear of time

better, and finally come to stand higher, than his poetry." The words, like Hamlet's, are rather wild and whirling. No prose ever written is likely to do that. But if not, like his verse, unique in splendour, Shelley's prose is of a beauty all its own. Some critics think that the best of it is in his letters, with their travel-pictures, the pen-paintings of a poet; others that his finest prose resides in his eloquent *Defence of Poetry*, which, besides being an admirable piece of writing, is literary criticism of the first, the highest order.

Sometimes Shelley painted the same scene both in prose and verse, so that we are able to set the two pictures side by side. His description of Pompeii is an excellent example :

Above and between the multitudinous shafts of sunshining columns was seen the sea, reflecting the purple heaven of noon above it, and supporting, as it were, on its line the dark lofty mountains of Sorrento, of a blue inexpressibly deep, and tinged towards their summit with streaks of new-fallen snow. Between was one small green island. Behind was the single summit of Vesuvius, rolling forth volumes of thick white smoke, whose foam-like column was sometimes darted into the clear dark sky, and fell in little streaks along the wind. Between Vesuvius and the nearer mountains, as through a chasm, was seen the main line of the loftiest Apennines, to the east. The day was radiant and warm. Every now and then we heard the subterranean thunder of Vesuvius; its distant deep peals seem to shake the very air and light of day, which interpenetrated our frames with the sullen and tremendous sound.

The Tombs were the most impressive things of all. The wild woods surround them on either side; and along the broad stones of the paved road which divides them, you hear the late leaves of autumn shiver and rustle in the stream of inconstant wind, as it were, like the steps of ghosts.

Now here is the replica in verse :

I stood within the city disinterred,  
And heard the autumnal leaves like light footfalls  
Of Spirits passing through the streets, and heard  
The mountain's slumberous voice at intervals  
Thrill through those roofless halls.

The oracular thunder penetrating shook  
The listening soul in my suspended blood.  
I felt that Earth out of her deep heart spoke.  
I felt, but heard not. Through white columns glowed  
The isle-sustaining ocean-flood.

The prose is very fine descriptive writing—splendid. But is it equal to the verse? Where in it is that penetrating music which has the power, like the very mountain-voice, to shake the soul?

Apart from Shelley's word-music, it is clear that he had the keenest



sense of the music of sound. Only a real music-lover could have written the enchanting lines :

I pant for the music which is divine,  
My heart in its thirst is a dying flower ;  
Pour forth the sound like enchanted wine,  
Loosen the notes in a silver shower.

It is often charged against the poetry of Shelley that, while strong in music, it is weak in imagery, in pictorial effect. It is true that Shelley's is a style of glowing colour, but not often boldly graphic. Sometimes, indeed, Shelley not only colours, but draws also, like a master ; as in the noble picture of the Hours in the *Prometheus*—the wild-eyed charioteers, with bright hair streaming, leaning forward in their cars to lash their rainbow-winged and flying steeds. Sometimes, also, he has a little passing piece of imagery such as this :

Two sister-antelopes  
By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,  
Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream—

A little picture, half painted, half suggested, of an indescribable witchery of effect. As a rule, however, Shelley cares far less for definite imagery than for effects of light and colour ; effects varying through all the scale, from scenes of vast dim tracts "robed in the lustrous gloom of leaden-coloured even"—from wild waves lighted awfully :

By the last glare of day's red agony,  
Which from a rent among the fiery clouds  
Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep—

down to the light-dissolving star-showers of soft-breaking seas, or the green and golden fire of glow-worms gleaming at twilight from the bells of lilies.

But what chiefly separates Shelley's pictures from those of other poets is his amazingly fine sense of tenderness of colour. There is nothing equal to his work in this respect ; nothing that glows like it, yet is so delicate. Some of his effects stand quite apart—alone in their great beauty. Take the description of the mystic shell which Proteus gave to Asia :

See the pale azure fading into silver,  
Lining it with a soft yet glowing light ;  
Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there ?

The secret of this sort of colouring, so rich, yet so ethereal, belongs to Shelley only, among the poets of the world.

As to Shelley's music, there is little need to speak. From every line we

have been reading it comes thrilling out, celestial as an angel's. For those whose spirit is attuned to hear it, comment is superfluous, and for others, idle. Who can "explain" a melody of Chopin to a man who has no ear?

Alas! The harp that woke that music was too soon to sound no more. Early in July 1822, Shelley set sail in a small boat from Leghorn. In a sudden squall the vessel sank, and Shelley, who could never learn to swim, went down without an effort. Some days later the body was washed up, and burnt, in antique fashion, on the shore. The heart alone was saved, conveyed to Rome, and buried near the resting-place of Keats. The stone bears the epitaph *Cor Cordium*—the heart of hearts—and is followed by the lines:

Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange.

Well chosen were the words of Ariel's song to set on Shelley's grave. Yet not less well might other words stand also on that stone—the last great lines of *Adonais*, those familiar lines:

The breath whose might I have invoked in song  
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven  
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng  
Whose sails were never to the tempest driven;  
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven!  
I am borne darkly, fearfully afar;  
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,  
The soul of Adonais, like a star,  
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

## § 8

### JOHN KEATS

"Keats's *Hyperion*," said Byron, "seems actually inspired by the Titans and as sublime as Æschylus." That is the same as saying—and most rightly saying—that Keats is one of the supreme poets of all time.

Genius is a wild flower that blossoms in strange crannies. Keats, whose father was an ostler in a livery stable, was born at Moorfields in London in 1797. He went to school at Enfield, where he learned a little Latin, but not a syllable of Greek, and afterwards began life as an apprentice to a surgeon. In due time he walked the hospitals, but he soon threw down his scalpels, which he hated; for his father, who had married his master's daughter, having left a little money, he was able to give up his future life to poetry alone.



His first volume, issued in 1817, contained some lovely verses, although, except for a single sonnet, still immature. This sonnet was *On first looking into Chapman's Homer*, a gem of inspiration.

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken ;  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men  
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

It is amazing that such verses should have been written by a poet who was a mere boy.

His next volume was *Endymion*—the story of the mountain-shepherd and the goddess of the Moon. It is full of lines still weak, but often lovely in their very weakness, and interspersed with passages of growing strength and splendour, such as the description of Bacchus and his revellers :

And as I sat, over the light blue hills  
There came a noise of revellers : the rills  
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—  
'Twas Bacchus and his crew !  
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills  
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—  
'Twas Bacchus and his kin !  
Like to a moving vintage down they came,  
Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame.

Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,  
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,  
With sidelong laughing ;  
And little rills of crimson wine imbrued  
His plump white arms and shoulders, enough white  
For Venus' pearly bite ;  
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,  
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass,  
Tipsily quaffing.  
Onward these myriads—with song and dance ;  
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians' prance,  
Web-foot alligators, crocodiles,  
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,  
Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil  
Of seaman, and stout galley-rowers' toil :  
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,  
Nor care for wind and tide.

It is interesting to note that these lines are a replica in words of the painting of "Bacchus and Ariadne," by Titian, in the National Gallery.

The very first line of the poem has passed into the language :

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.

And one such thing of beauty is the " Song of Sorrow " in Book IV :

O Sorrow  
Why dost borrow  
The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye ?—  
To give the glow-worm light ?  
Or on a moonless night  
To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spry ?

Soon after the appearance of *Endymion* Keats fell in love. The lady, Fanny Brawne, was a charming creature, young, gay, and volatile, something of a rattle and a great deal of a flirt, who kept her jealous lover on the rack. In vain were all his pleadings :

Ah ! if you prize my subdued soul above  
The poor, the fading, brief pride of an hour,  
Let none profane my Holy See of love,  
Or with a rude hand break  
The sacramental cake—  
Let none else touch the just new-budded flower.  
If not, may my eyes close,  
Love ! on their last repose.

Better, indeed, for his happiness, to die at twenty-five than to wear his life out with the feather-headed Fanny.

His last volume, *Lamia, and other Poems*, appeared in 1820. As it contained *Hyperion*, *Lamia*, *Isabella*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and the five great Odes, it is not too much to say that it is the finest book of poems ever given to the world.

Let us consider first the great blank-verse poem of *Hyperion*, of which Byron's panegyric has been quoted. Here is the passage he refers to, the picture of the vanquished Titans in their den of refuge, beaten in combat by the younger gods :

It was a den where no insulting light  
Could glimmer on their tears ; where their own groans  
They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar  
Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,  
Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where.  
Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seemed  
Ever as if just rising from a sleep,  
Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns ;  
And thus in thousand hugest phantasies  
Made a fit roofing to this nest of woe.

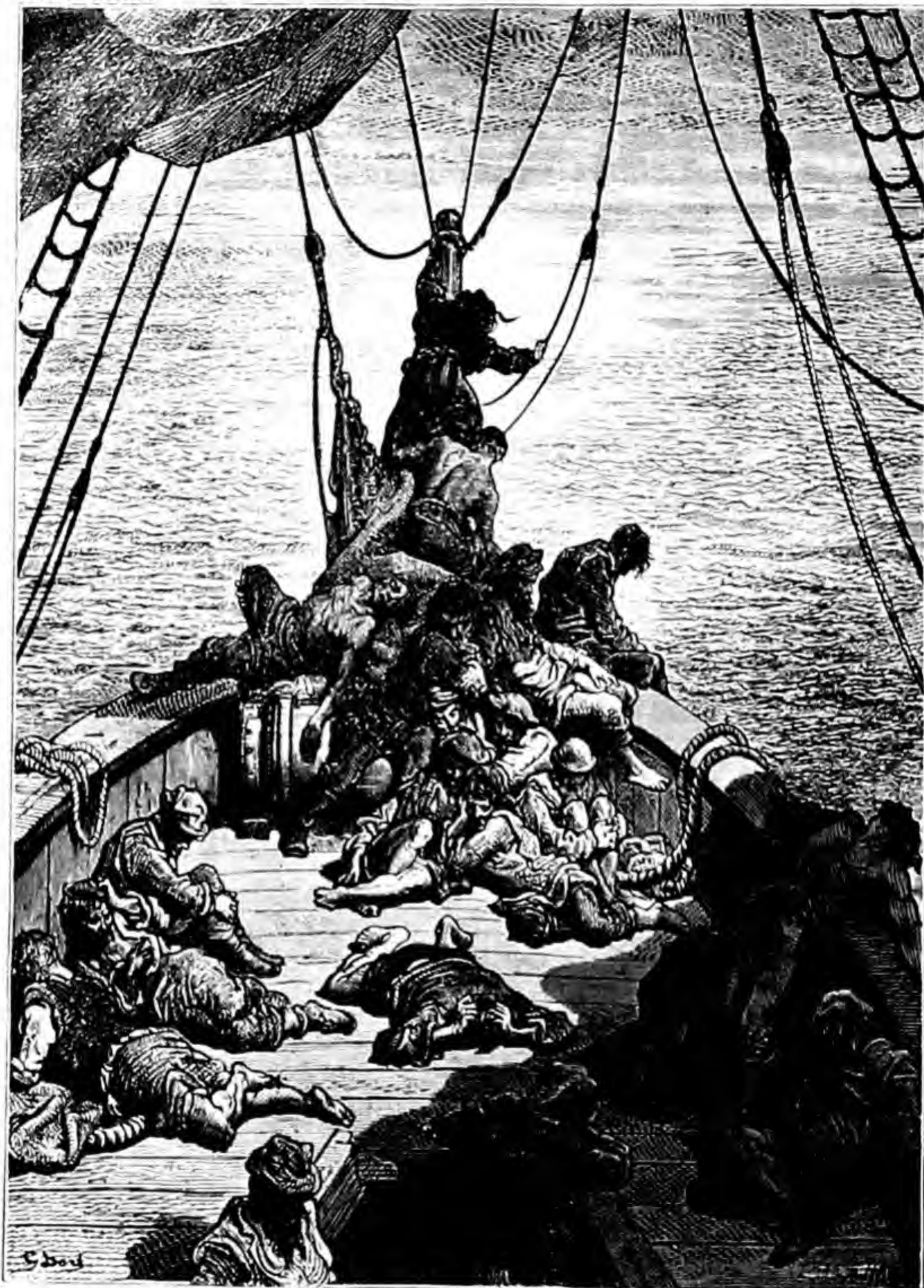


*Photo: Frederick Hollyer*

"THE HAPPY WARRIOR," BY G. F. WATTS, R.A.

"And while the mortal mist is gathering, draws  
His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause.  
This is the Happy Warrior . . ."

It is possible that G. F. Watts was to some extent inspired by Wordsworth's lines when he painted this picture. We know that it was his intention to convey the idea of a soldier dying for his country, and when the end is near, the vision of his love appears and kisses him on the brow, but it may be said that Wordsworth's poem and this picture by Watts illustrate with diverse dignity the same ideal.



*Picture Post Library*

ONE OF GUSTAVE DORÉ'S ILLUSTRATIONS FOR *THE ANCIENT MARINER*

"Water, water every where  
Nor any drop to drink."





*Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the Tate Gallery*

### "DON JUAN," BY CHARLES RICKETTS

The old Spanish story of the libertine Don Juan Tenorio has inspired dramatists, poets, artists, musicians. Molière's play, Byron's poem, Shaw's philosophic interlude to *Man and Superman*: these and many more versions have followed the first dramatisation by the Spaniard Tirso de Molina. One of the most dramatic incidents of the story is that when the statue of Juan's victim's father appears in the bedroom and challenges him to fight a duel. Charles Ricketts, Romantic and theatrical painter, has pictured the scene.



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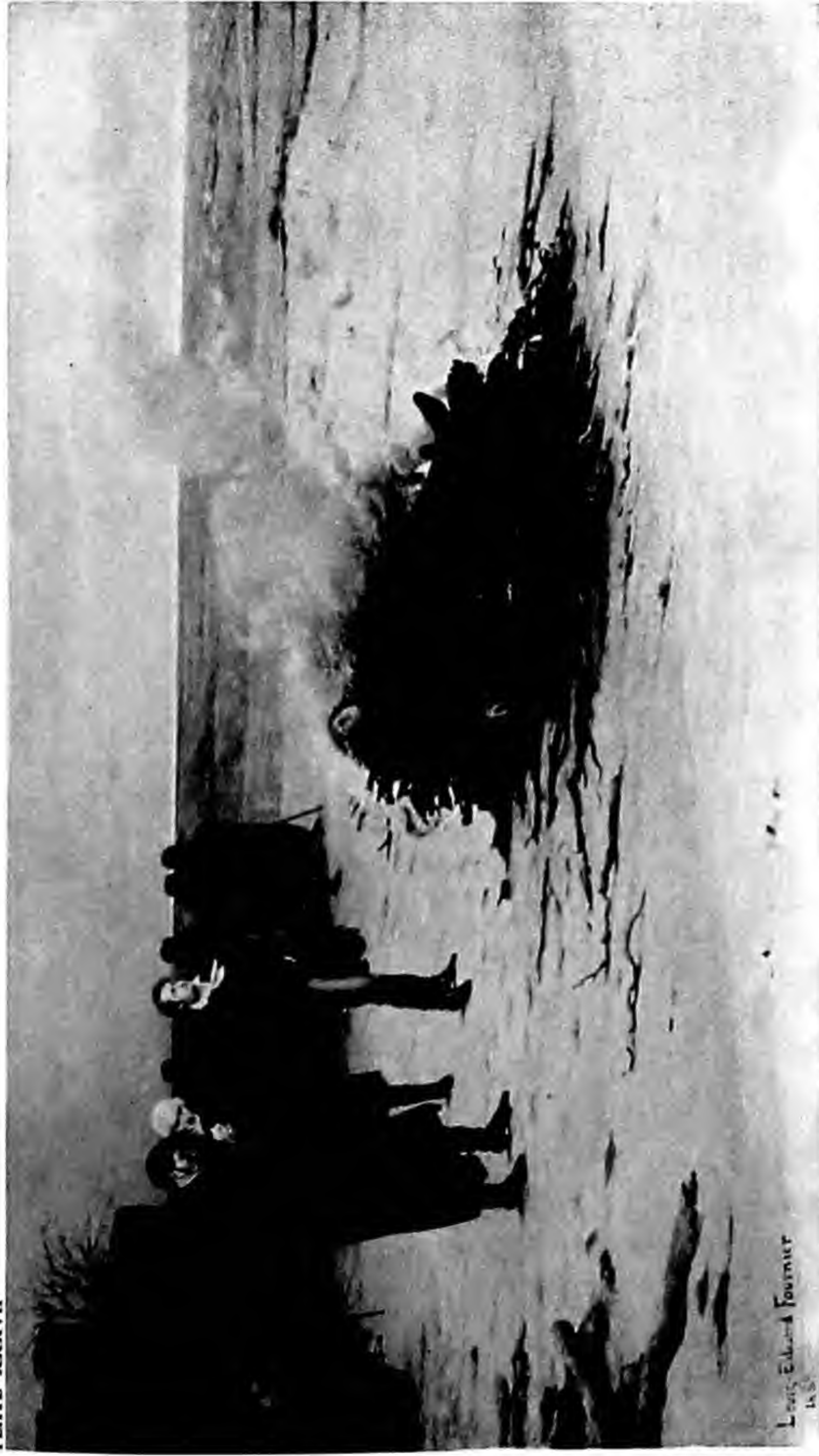
"LORENZO AND ISABELLA," BY MILLAIS

Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

The subject of this picture was taken from Keats's poem "Isabella, or the Pot of Basil."

W. F. Munsell





Louis Edward Fournier

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W. I. Mansell

"THE BURNING OF SHELLEY'S BODY," BY LOUIS EDWARD FOURNIER.

The burning of Shelley's body was carried out in accordance with the quarantine laws of Italy after his death by drowning in the Gulf of Spezia. The last rites were performed in the presence of Byron, Trelawny and Leigh Hunt.

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Trivandrum



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"THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL," BY R. BEAVIS  
Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield





*Picture Post Library*

"QUASIMODO," BY WIERTZ.

The mis-shapen hunchback of Notre Dame in Victor Hugo's famous book.

*How many will love  
the hunchback*



*Picture Post Library*

"CHARLES LAMB, 1819," FROM THE WATER COLOUR BY G. F. JOSEPH.

British Museum



Instead of thrones, hard flint they sat upon,  
 Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge  
 Stubborned with iron. All were not assembled  
 Some chained in torture, and some wandering.  
 Cæus, and Gyges, and Briareus,  
 Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyryon,  
 With many more, the brawniest in assault,  
 Were pent in regions of laborious breath ;  
 Dungeoned in opaque element to keep  
 Their clenched teeth still clenched, and all their limbs  
 Locked up like veins of metal, cramped and screwed ;  
 Without a motion, save of their big hearts  
 Heaving in pain, and horribly convulsed  
 With sanguine, feverous, boiling gurge of pulse.  
 Mnemosyne was straying in the world ;  
 Far from her moon had Phœbe wandered ;  
 And many else were free to roam abroad,  
 But for the main, here found they covert drear,  
 Scarce images of life, one here, one there,  
 Lay vast and edgeways ; like a dismal cirque  
 When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,  
 In dull November, and their chancel vault,  
 The heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.  
 Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbour gave  
 Or word or look, or action of despair.  
 Cæus was one ; his ponderous iron mace  
 Lay by him, and a shatter'd rib of rock  
 Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined.  
 Iapetus another ; in his grasp,  
 A serpent's plashy neck ; its barbèd tongue  
 Squeezed from the gorge, and all its uncurled length  
 Dead ; and because the creature could not spit  
 Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.  
 Next Cottus : prone he lay, chin uppermost,  
 As though in pain ; for still upon the flint  
 He ground severe his skull, with open mouth  
 And eyes at horrid working.

To match this picture we must go to the first two books of *Paradise Lost*, or certain parts of the "Inferno."

The scene in *Lamia* is an enchanted forest, a place of fauns and dryads, with the god Hermes hovering on coloured wings about the dingles, in search of a coy nymph who has escaped him. He comes by chance upon a snake amidst a thicket—a snake who is enchanted also. It is Lamia, the woman-serpent, a thing of beauty and of fear :

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,  
 Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue ;

Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,  
 Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson-barred ;  
 And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,  
 Dissolved, or brighter shone, or interwreathed  
 Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—  
 So rainbow-sided, touched with miseries,  
 She seemed at once some penanced lady elf,  
 Some demon's mistress or the demon's self.  
 Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire  
 Sprinkled with stars like Ariadne's tiar.  
 Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet !  
 She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete  
 And for her eyes—what could such eyes do there  
 But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair ?  
 As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.

The god, with a touch of his transfiguring wand, charms her back into a woman's shape, and sets her down in Corinth, whence she came. There she meets her lover, Lysius, a young Greek. By spells she builds a splendid palace in a single night, with a banquet-table glowing with a marriage feast. But when the guests, the friends of Lysius, assemble, they find among them a little bald old withered man, Apollonius the Philosopher, the bridegroom's tutor. He mutters in his pupil's ear a deadly warning :

" Fool ! Fool ! " repeated he, while his eyes still  
 Relented not nor moved : " from every ill  
 Of life have I preserved thee to this day,  
 And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey ? "

" A serpent ! " he re-echoed. No sooner said than with a frightful scream she vanished into air.

*The Eve of St. Agnes* must be reckoned, on the whole, the most splendid of Keats's poems. It tells the story of a lovely lady shut up within a castle on St. Agnes's Eve, when maidens see their lovers in their dreams. Porphyro, her own lover, steals into the castle at the peril of his life—" for there were sleeping dragons all around "—and conceals himself within the maiden's chamber, so that when she wakens her eyes alight upon no visionary lover, but upon the living man whom she adores. This is the description of the lovely Madeline, about to seek the sleep of magic dreams :

Out went the taper as she hurried in ;  
 Its little smoke in pallid moonshine died :  
 She closed the door, she panted, all akin  
 To spirits of the air and visions wide :



No uttered syllable, or woe betide !  
 But to her heart her heart was voluble,  
 Paining with eloquence her balmy side ;  
 As though a tongueless nightingale should swell  
 Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

A casement high and triple-arched there was,  
 All garlanded with carven imageries  
 Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,  
 And diamonded with panes of quaint device  
 Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,  
 As are the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings ;  
 And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,  
 And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,  
 A shielded scutcheon blushed with blood of queens and kings.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,  
 And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,  
 As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon ;  
 Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,  
 And on her silver cross soft amethyst,  
 And on her hair a glory, like a saint :  
 She seemed a splendid angel, newly drest,  
 Save wings, for heaven :—Porphyro grew faint :  
 She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

Anon his heart revives : her vespers done,  
 Of all its wreathèd pearls her hair she frees ;  
 Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one ;  
 Loosens her fragrant bodice ; by degrees  
 Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees  
 Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,  
 Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,  
 In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,  
 But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,  
 In sort of wakeful swoon, perplexed she lay,  
 Until the popped warmth of sleep oppressed  
 Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away ;  
 Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day ;  
 Blissfully havened both from joy and pain ;  
 Clasped like a missal where swart Paynims pray :  
 Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,  
 As though a rose should shut and be a bud again.

It has been generally assumed that, because he often took his stories from the Greek mythology, Keats wrote in the Greek spirit. Nothing

can be further from the truth. Keats was above all things the poet of romance.

Keats must, on the whole, be placed at the head of poet-painters. He had, in unapproached degree, the two essential gifts of a great artist—the sense of beauty, and the sense of colour. He is the greatest colourist in literature. Before him, there was nothing of that passionate delight in colour for its own sake—nothing even in the best of Chaucer or of Spenser—which can bear comparison for a moment with such a study, for example, as that of Lamia, the witch-serpent, which has been given above.

Keats, like all great colourists, loved crimson in his soul. It would not have been possible to him, as it was to Chaucer and to Wordsworth, to glut his passion on a daisy, rather than on “the wealth of globed pconies.” He loved the lustrous bubbling of red wine—the glowing of the tiger-moth’s deep-damasked wings—the blood-red scutcheon blazoned in the panes. Exuberance of colour was the gift of Keats to poetry.

The surest mark of a born painter is the tendency to shun abstractions and to think in imageries ; and of this tendency perhaps no poet ever really had so great a share as Keats. To a mind in which this tendency is strong, it is not enough to tell us, for example, that a night is “bitter chill”—chillness is an abstract notion ; it must have form and substance ; it must proceed to set before our eyes a series of vivid little frosty *scenes* :

The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold ;  
The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass ;  
And silent was the flock in woolly fold.

Scott was a poet of great graphic power. Let us try a piece of his description against a piece, as nearly like it as possible, of the work of Keats. Here, first, is Scott :

The corbels were carved grotesque and grim.

And here is Keats :

The carvèd angels, ever eager-eyed,  
Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests,  
With hair blown back and wings put cross-wise on their breasts.

“Grotesque and grim” conveys a general impression, but no image ; the reader is left to work out for himself the details of the piece of carving on the corbels. Keats sets the image itself before us, and we have only to regard it.

But there is something more than this about the work of Keats. There is the glamour, the deep romantic charm, in which his finest lines are “rich



to intoxication"—such lines as those from the *Ode to a Nightingale*, which are one of the supreme wonders of the world of art :

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !  
 No hungry generations tread thee down ;  
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
 In ancient days by emperor and clown :  
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,  
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;  
 The same that oft-times hath  
 Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Who does not feel the *glamour* of these immortal lines ? Such verses differ from mere word-painting, however rich and vivid, as a musk-rose differs from a red camellia. The perfume of poetry is about them, as well as the colour and the form. And what a master of the poetic, the musical word ! And how easily and potently he suggests and maintains a scene, a setting, an atmosphere !

At the age of twenty-five Keats died at Rome. He sleeps beneath the pyramid of Caius Cestius, a spot so beautiful that, in the phrase of Shelley, whose heart was soon to rest beside him, "it makes one in love with death to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place." The inscription on the grave is of his own devising : "Here lies one whose name is writ in water." The lovely, touching words are idle. That name is written, not in water, but on the everlasting rock of Time.

## READING LIST

*A Survey of English Literature : 1780-1830*, by Oliver Elton (Arnold), and C. H. Herford's *The Age of Wordsworth* (Bell) are invaluable.

### BYRON :

*Poems of Lord Byron*, Oxford Poets (Oxford University Press).

*Complete Poetical and Dramatic Works*, 3 vols., Everyman's Library (Dent).

*Byron*, by John Nichol, English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

*Byron*, by A. Maurois (Cape).

*Byron : The Last Journey (1823-1824)*, by Harold Nicolson (Constable).

*Essay on Byron*, Macaulay (Oxford University Press).

One of the best biographies of Byron is that by Ethel Colburn Mayne.

SHELLEY :

- Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, edited by Thomas Hutchinson, Oxford Poets (Oxford University Press).  
*Shelley's Poetical Works*, 2 vols., Everyman's Library (Dent).  
*Complete Prose Works*, edited by Richard Herne Shepherd, St. Martin's Library edition (Chatto & Windus).  
*Shelley*, by J. A. Symonds, English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).  
*Ariel*, by A. Maurois (Cape).  
*Shelley*, by Oliver Elton (Arnold).  
*Shelley*, a literary study by Francis Thompson (Burns, Oates, and Washbourne) : a most perceptive interpretation of Shelley the poet.  
*Shelley*, by Edmund Blunden (Collins).  
*Shelley, Godwin and their Circle*, by H. N. Brailsford (Oxford University Press).

KEATS :

- The Complete Poetical Works of John Keats*, edited by H. Buxton Forman, C.B., Oxford Poets (Oxford University Press).  
*Keats's Poems*, 1 vol., Everyman's Library (Dent).  
*Keats's Poems*, edited by Lord Houghton, 1 vol., Bohn's Popular Library (Bell) ; also by Lord Houghton, *The Life and Letters of Keats*.  
*The Letters of John Keats* (Oxford University Press).  
*Keats*, by Sir Sidney Colvin, English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).  
*Keats*, by John Middleton Murry (Cape). See also his *Keats and Shakespeare and Studies in Keats* (Oxford University Press).  
*Keats and Shelley*, by Ernest Raymond (Cassell).



## XXVII

### SCOTT, DUMAS, AND HUGO

#### § I

#### SCOTT

THE publication of Walter Scott's *Waverley* in 1814 marks the beginning of the supremacy of the novel as popular literature above all other forms of literary art. The vogue of Richardson and Fielding had passed, at least for the moment. Mrs. Radcliffe's thrills had lost the charm of novelty. Maria Edgeworth never had a great public. The *Waverley* novels had their tens of thousand readers where Scott's predecessors only had their hundreds.

Walter Scott was born at Edinburgh on August 15, 1771. His father was a Writer to the Signet, the Scots equivalent to an English solicitor. His mother was the daughter of a professor in Edinburgh University. On both his father's and his mother's sides Scott was descended from ancient border yeoman families. Scott was a weakling as a boy. The lameness that was his all through his life and which prevented him from being a soldier was due to the arrest of growth in the right leg in infancy.

As a child living on his grandfather's farm he listened eagerly to border ballads and border stories, and when he was sent to the Edinburgh High School he had already acquired an unusual knowledge of the folk-lore and traditions of his native land. While he was a schoolboy he set himself to learn French that he might thoroughly understand and enjoy old French romances, and before he was fifteen he had learned Italian in order to read Dante and Ariosto in the original. The Covenanter atmosphere of his father's house could not have been very congenial to this young and ardent collector of romances; but the unromantic home found its compensation in the fact that Scott, as a young man, spent all his holidays scouring the countryside searching for ballads and local legends.

In 1792 Scott was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates. He never practised in the courts nor indeed ever intended to practise. His ambition was to obtain official appointments of a not too exacting nature which would ensure him a living and leave him with leisure for literary work. This ambition was fulfilled. In 1799 he was appointed Sheriff-Deputy of Selkirkshire with light duties and a salary of three hundred a year, and seven

years later he secured the reversion of the office of Clerk of Session. For six years he performed the duties without salary, and then for nineteen years he received a salary of £1600 a year for work that took him, according to his biographer and son-in-law, Lockhart, three or four hours a day during six months of each year.

When he was nineteen Scott fell in love with Willamina, the daughter of Sir John Stuart. The romance lasted for six years, and then the young lady married William Forbes, who in after years was one of Scott's most devoted friends. Scott took his disappointment with stoical dignity, but, referring to the incident in his *Journal*, he professed that though his broken heart had been pieced together, "the crack will remain to my dying day." Willamina is immortalised in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, in *Rob Roy*, and in *Rokeby*.

In October 1797 Scott married Charlotte Margaret Charpentier in St. Mary's Church, Carlisle. His wife was a beautiful woman, the daughter of a Lyons Royalist who had been brought up in England. She possessed considerable strength of character, charm, and beauty, and though she was never able really to understand her husband, the marriage was tolerably successful, and after her death Scott referred to her as "the true and faithful companion of my fortunes, good and bad."

There is an unbroken consistency in Walter Scott's literary life. From *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* to the last of his novels he was intent on story-telling, and the stories that he told were deliberately offered to the reader as a means of escape from the commonplace. The seventeenth century in France and the eighteenth century in England were the centuries of classicism, ages in which the maker of literature was mainly concerned with correctness of expression. The greatest of all the French classic writers is Racine, whose unchallenged reputation hampered the development of French literature until the romantic revolt of the nineteenth century. The apostle of classicism in England was Dr. Johnson, who, despite the fact that he wrote the lives of the poets, may be regarded as the most typical figure of the century described as "an age of prose and common sense." The English romantic movement, of which Scott was one of the great figures, was a revolt against both the prose and the common sense, a protest against the realism of Fielding and the commonplace sentimentality of Richardson, an escape from the streets to the mountains.

The revolt began with the "Gothic" melodramas of Horace Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe, and Monk Lewis. It came to its height with the poetry of Wordsworth, Byron, Coleridge, and Shelley, and the historical romances of Walter Scott. We have seen that from his childhood Scott had an eager appetite for ancient stories and traditional songs, and he was therefore well fitted to take a leading place in the literary movement which sought beauty and interest in a picturesque past. In *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.



in *Marmion*, and in *The Lady of the Lake* Scott excited his readers with (to quote Hazlitt) "the interest and curiosity belonging to a wild country and a distant period of time."

His poetry is not great, considered as poetry, yet we return to it and love it. It has been accurately characterised by Sir Leslie Stephen: "It is not poetry of the first order. It is not the poetry of deep meditation or rapt enthusiasm. . . . And yet it has a charm, which becomes more sensible the more familiar we grow with it, the charm of unaffected and spontaneous love of nature; and not only is it perfectly in harmony with the nature which Scott loves so well, but it is still the best interpreter of the sound healthy love of wild scenery. Wordsworth no doubt goes deeper; and Byron is more vigorous; and Shelley more ethereal. But it is, and will remain, a good thing to have a breath from the Cheviots brought straight into the London streets, as Scott alone can do it."

*The Lay of the Last Minstrel* sold in far larger numbers than any English poem had ever sold before, and was a success because it was a story. It brought Scott nearly eight hundred pounds, and its success determined him seriously to regard literature as a profession. The second of Scott's long poems, *Marmion*, was published in 1808, Scott receiving a thousand pounds for the copyright from Constable, his Edinburgh publisher.

There are passages in *Marmion* that reach a high level. Constance, betrayed by Marmion, is about to meet her doom by the hand of the executioners; the bell is tolling:

Even in the vesper's heavenly tone,  
They seem'd to hear a dying groan,  
And bade the passing knell to toll  
For welfare of a parting soul.  
Slow o'er the midnight wave it swung,  
Northumbrian rocks in answer rung,  
To Warkworth cell the echoes roll'd,  
His beads the wakeful hermit told,  
The Bamborough peasant raised his head,  
But slept ere half a prayer he said;  
So far was heard the mighty knell,  
The stag sprung up on Cheviot Fell,  
Spread his broad nostril to the wind,  
Listed before, aside, behind,  
Then couch'd him down beside the hind,  
And quaked among the mountain fern,  
To hear that sound so dull and stern.

Andrew Lang has pointed out the resemblance between the plot of *Marmion* and the plot of *Ivanhoe*. The poem tells a splendid moving story interlarded with many fine "purple passages" and ending with a sustained

account of the last stand at the battle of Flodden which has no equal in modern poetry. Marmion himself was dying when news comes to him that the English had won the battle :

With that, straight up the hill there rode  
Two horsemen drench'd with gore,  
And in their arms, a helpless load,  
A wounded knight they bore.  
His hand still strain'd the broken brand ;  
His arms were smear'd with blood and sand :  
Dragg'd from among the horses' feet,  
With dinted shield, and helmet beat,  
The falcon-crest and plumage gone,  
Can that be haughty Marmion ! . . .

Young Blount his armour did unlace,  
And, gazing on his ghastly face,  
Said—" By Saint George, he's gone !  
That spear-wound has our master sped,  
And see, the deep cut on his head !  
Good-night to Marmion."—  
" Unnurtured Blount ! thy brawling cease ;  
He opes his eyes," said Eustace ; " peace !"

When, doff'd his casque, he felt free air,  
Around 'gan Marmion wildly stare :—  
" Where's Harry Blount ? Fitz-Eustace where ?  
Linger ye here, ye hearts of hare !  
Redeem my pennon—charge again !  
Cry—' Marmion to the rescue !'—Vain !

Let Stanley charge with spur of fire—  
With Chester charge, and Lancashire,  
Full upon Scotland's central host,  
Or victory and England's lost.—  
Must I bid twice ?—hence, varlets ! fly !  
Leave Marmion here alone—to die."  
They parted, and alone he lay ;

The war, that for a space did fail,  
Now trebly thundering swelled the gale,  
And—STANLEY ! was the cry :  
A light on Marmion's visage spread,  
And fired his glazing eye :  
With dying hand, above his head,  
He shook the fragment of his blade,  
And shouted " Victory !  
Charge, Chester, charge ! On, Stanley, on !"  
Were the last words of Marmion.



What Andrew Lang calls the "inimitably vivacious" *The Lady of the Lake* was published in 1810. Here again Scott retells old tales, introducing the element of the supernatural so characteristic of romantic literature, of its Monk Lewis banalities as well as its masterpieces. One of the finest descriptive passages in *The Lady of the Lake* is the chase of "the antlered monarch of the waste" described in the first canto.

The antler'd monarch of the waste  
 Sprung from his heathery couch in haste  
 But, ere his fleet career he took,  
 The dew-drops from his flanks he shook,  
 Like crested leader proud and high  
 Toss'd his beam'd frontlet to the sky ;  
 A moment gazed adown the dale,  
 A moment snuff'd the tainted gale,  
 A moment listen'd to the cry,  
 That thicken'd as the chase drew nigh ;  
 Then, as the headmost foes appear'd,  
 With one brave bound the copse he clear'd,  
 And, stretching forward free and far,  
 Sought the wild heaths of Uam-Var.

Yell'd on the view the opening pack ;  
 Rock, glen, and cavern, paid them back  
 To many a mingled sound at once  
 The awaken'd mountain gave response.  
 A hundred dogs bay'd deep and strong,  
 Clatter'd a hundred steeds along,  
 Their peal the merry horns rung out,  
 A hundred voices join'd the shout ;  
 With hark and whoop and wild halloo,  
 No rest Benvoirlich's echoes knew.  
 Far from the tumult fled the roe,  
 Close in her covert cower'd the doe  
 The falcon, from her cairn on high,  
 Cast on the rout a wondering eye,  
 Till far beyond her piercing ken  
 The hurricane had swept the glen.  
 Faint, and more faint, its failing din  
 Return'd from cavern, cliff, and linn,  
 And silence settled, wide and still,  
 On the lone wood and mighty hill.

Scott's one long poem, *Rokeby*, was published in 1812, to be followed by *The Lord of the Isles* in the following year.

## § 2

Scott began to write *Waverley* in 1805. He put the manuscript by and apparently forgot all about it until 1810, when he finished the story in a few weeks of unremitting labour with a power of persistent application and almost unparalleled output which was his characteristic. It has been said that there is a striking consistency in artistic aim in all of Scott's writings, but while this is true there is one striking difference between the poems and the novels. In the poems he is concerned only with romantic personages and highfalutin sentiment. In the novels, as R. H. Hutton well said, "the business of life is even better portrayed than its sentiment." Scott could find no inspiration in the small happenings of ordinary contemporary life. He was bored by circumstances that, related by a realist of genius like Jane Austen, become interesting and intensely dramatic. But though Scott required a large canvas and striking colours, he is always interested in humanity, and the characters that he created which have most reality are always those that are least highly placed. In this respect his novels are in striking contrast with those of Alexandre Dumas. The fact is that when he sat down to write historical novels, Scott was also eager accurately to describe the characteristics of the Scottish people, to do for the Scottish what Maria Edgeworth had already done for the Irish in her *Castle Rackrent* and other novels.

Scott's intense desire to paint true pictures of his own people made him a realist as well as a writer of romance. In the scenes of long ago he places men and women in whom the reader can believe, whose struggles and difficulties he can understand, whose flesh and blood are genuine, and who are of like passions with the people of to-day.

Of Scott's thirty-two novels, twenty-one have their scenes wholly or partly in Scotland, and of the other eleven, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, *Quentin Durward*, and *The Talisman* have Scottish heroes. *Waverley* was concerned with the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, an event which occurred in the generation immediately preceding Scott and which had left a scar on Scottish life which had by no means disappeared in Scott's own day. *Guy Mannering*, *The Antiquary*, *Rob Roy*, *The Heart of Midlothian*, and *Redgauntlet*, all of them among Scott's best work, also belong to the eighteenth century. The scenes of *Old Mortality*, *A Legend of Montrose*, *The Pirate*, *Woodstock*, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, and *Peveril of the Peak* are in the seventeenth century; of *The Monastery*, *The Abbot*, and *Kenilworth*, in the sixteenth; of *The Fair Maid of Perth*, *Quentin Durward*, and *Anne of Geierstein*, in the fifteenth; of *Castle Dangerous*, in the fourteenth; of *Ivanhoe*, *The Talisman*, and *The Betrothed*, in the



twelfth ; and of *Count Robert of Paris* in the eleventh. Only one of Scott's stories, *St. Ronan's Well*, dealt with the life of his own time, and that was a conspicuous failure. It will be seen from this list that Scott's work covers eight centuries, and if the list is considered by readers well acquainted with the novels they will certainly agree with Professor Hudson that those of them with "the greatest grasp of character, vitality, and spontaneous power are those which belong to the Scotland of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."

The Scott novels are full of historical inaccuracies. One must not go to the novelist for facts. The anachronisms are well known. In *Kenilworth*, for instance, he puts quotations from Shakespeare into the mouths of his characters at a time when the poet was not yet in his teens. He takes Amy Robsart to Kenilworth, where she never was, and he brings the Young Pretender back to Scotland after Culloden. But details of this sort are of small importance. He who only knows facts, knows nothing of history. It is a far more cogent criticism of Scott to say that in his reproductions of mediæval life he has little appreciation of the characteristics that certainly gave the Middle Ages their dignity and probably gave them their joy, particularly that love of beauty which remains enshrined in the great Gothic cathedrals and finds humbler expression in every example of mediæval craftsmanship still in existence. The imagination of the novelist gives life to the dry bones of history. There are few more intriguing figures in historical records than Louis XI of France. The serious historian devotes pages and chapters to the analysis of the character of the king who began the work of making France a united nation, the work to be completed by Richelieu and Henri Quatre. Scott succeeds in vividly portraying Louis XI in two paragraphs in the first chapter of *Quentin Durward*. The young Scottish adventurer, tramping to the court of the French king, is himself a fine figure of romance.

*Waverley* was followed in 1815 by *Guy Mannering*, which was written in six weeks, and which Saintsbury considers "perhaps the very best of the novels for merit of construction and interest of detail." It contains some of the most memorable of the Scott characters—Dominic Sampson, Meg Merrilies, Dandie Dinmont. *The Antiquary* was published in May 1816, and *Old Mortality* and *Black Dwarf* were published at the end of the same year. *Old Mortality* is distinguished by its picture of Claverhouse. It is a stirring tale of the time of the Covenanters, and Scott introduces into it a suggestion of the supernatural in which he was always so interested. *Black Dwarf* is one of Scott's novels nowadays very little read. Andrew Lang thought the book "of little account," and on the other hand Saintsbury considers "the earlier part of *Black Dwarf* as happy as all but the best of Scott's work."



*Rob Roy* was published in December 1817. While he was writing it, Scott was already suffering from the persistent cramp in the stomach which was to cause him so much agony during his later years. *Rob Roy* has the same reputation in Scotland as Robin Hood has in England, and the subject was therefore a popular one so far as the public north of the Tweed were concerned. Its heroine, Diana Vernon, is without question the most successful and most lovable of all Scott's heroines, another prominent character being the inimitable Bailie Nicol Jarvie. *The Heart of Midlothian*, by common consent Scott's masterpiece, was published in June 1818. Among a host of splendid characters it contains the admirable Jeanie Deans, who has become almost as real to us as Sam Weller himself. *The Bride of Lammermoor* appeared in 1819, a gloomy story the plot of which has been used as the libretto of a popular opera. *The Master of Ravenswood* is melodramatic, and Lucy Ashton is one of those pitifully pathetic heroines in whom it is always difficult to believe.

*The Legend of Montrose* belongs to the same year. It is not easy to disagree with Thackeray in considering Dugald Dalgetty, the rugged rittmeister, a secondary figure of the plot but the dominating figure of the novel, as one of the finest of all Scott's creations. Saintsbury suggests that not even Dumas could have created a character well described as "an admirable human being, a wonderful national type of the more eccentric kind, and the embodiment of an astonishing amount of judiciously adjusted erudition."

*Ivanhoe*, the first Scott novel with an English theme, appeared at the end of 1819. The dry-as-dust historian has been very busy pointing out historical errors in this great romance. But who cares? Let it be admitted that the two heroines Rebecca and Rowena are very dull young women (quite as dull as the typical Dickens heroine), but who has not rejoiced in the splendid passage of arms, the scenes in Sherwood Forest, the appearance of Richard Cœur de Lion, the whole glittering pageant of drama and colour. Incidentally Andrew Lang points out that Scott's vivid contrast between the characters of the Anglo-Saxons and their Norman conquerors attracted the studies of the French historian Thierry and led to interesting and valuable results.

*The Monastery*, a relatively dull story, *The Abbot*, distinguished by its picture of Mary Queen of Scots, and *Kenilworth* are the next in order of the novels. *Kenilworth* tells the story of the Earl of Leicester and the luckless Amy Robsart. Queen Elizabeth appears in it: not perhaps the Elizabeth of history, but a very dignified and impressive monarch.

*The Pirate*, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, *Peveril of the Peak*, *Quentin Durward*, *St. Ronan's Well*, and *Redgauntlet* followed in quick succession. *Peveril of the Peak* is admittedly a failure. So is *St. Ronan's Well*, a sort of Jane Austen



imitation, bowdlerised by its author into futility to placate the prudery of his evil genius, James Ballantyne.

## § 3

Despite his ill-health, Scott had worked harder than almost any other great figure in literary history, and his books had brought him fortune as well as fame. He received his baronetcy in 1818. He was a man of many friends and no enemies. He had a European reputation that equalled the reputation of Voltaire and Goethe. His country house at Abbotsford, which he had just purchased and elaborated, was valued at fifty thousand pounds. He had spent three thousand five hundred pounds in buying a captaincy in the King's Hussars for his heir, the eldest of his four children. In January 1825 he gave a grand ball at Abbotsford in honour of his son's engagement. And a few months afterwards he was practically penniless.

It is impossible to attempt to give any account of Scott's complicated financial arrangements with the Ballantynes and Constable, the publisher. He financed them, they advanced money to him, and the whole series of transactions can only be understood by an expert. James Ballantyne was evidently an extremely stupid person who never kept proper books, while Scott always lived "in a mist about money." Anyhow, the result was that, at the age of fifty-five, broken in health and already worn out with work, Scott sat down to write books which would pay off a debt of nearly a hundred and thirty thousand pounds. Was there ever a more magnificent resolution? "I will involve no friend, either rich or poor," he said; "my own right hand shall do it." He first finished *Woodstock*, a novel entirely written in three months, and sold it for eight thousand two hundred and twenty-eight pounds. Then he wrote his *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*, an absolute "pot-boiler," the two first editions of which brought him eighteen thousand pounds. This was followed by a series of stories and essays. In two years he earned nearly forty thousand pounds (it is said that his income from his novels over a long series of years was between fifteen and twenty thousand pounds a year), and his grateful creditors met and passed the following resolution: "That Sir Walter Scott be requested to accept of his furniture, plate, linens, paintings, library, and curiosities of every description, as the best means the creditors have of expressing their very high sense of his most honourable conduct, and in grateful acknowledgment for the unparalleled and most successful exertions he has made and continues to make for them."

*The Fair Maid of Perth* was published in 1828, *Anne of Geierstein* in 1829, *Count Robert of Paris* in 1831, and *Castle Dangerous*, the last of the novels,



in the same year. They are the work of a broken man, and it would be absurd to compare them to his earlier romances. His wife had died in 1826, and while he was slaving to pay his creditors he had two strokes of paralysis. He was at last persuaded that he must leave off working and rest, at least for a time. The Government put a frigate at his disposal, and in October 1831 he sailed for Italy from Portsmouth. Wordsworth and his wife came to see him just before he left Abbotsford. During his tour Scott grew worse. While he was in Rome he heard of Goethe's death, and then his one desire was to hurry home. He reached Abbotsford on July 11, 1832, and he died on the 21st September of that year. Almost his last words was his admonition to Lockhart to "Be a good man, my dear, be virtuous, be religious, be a good man."

Scott's place in literature is unchallengeable. He remains the master story-teller, as he himself said, sufficiently repaid if his "scenes, unlaboured and loosely put together, have sufficient interest in them to amuse in one corner the pain of the body; in another to relieve anxiety of mind; in a third place to un wrinkle a brow bent with the furrows of daily toil; in another to fill the place of bad thoughts or to suggest better; in yet another to induce an idler to study the history of his country; in all . . . to furnish harmless amusement."

Sir Walter Scott loved the open air and men of action and brave deeds and simple people. He was not to be daunted by misfortune, he never lacked in kindness or in courtesy. His friends were innumerable and his servants adored him. A finer man was never a great writer, and posterity owes him nearly as great a debt as it owes to Dante, Shakespeare, and Dickens.

## § 4

## ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Stevenson described Alexandre Dumas as "the ventripotent mulatto, the great eater, worker, earner, and waster, the man of much and witty laughter, the man of the great heart and, alas! of the doubtful honesty." Alexandre Dumas the elder was a boisterous literary adventurer. He was the son of one of Napoleon's generals, who lost his master's favour by too plain speaking and was allowed to die in poverty and neglect. General Dumas was born in Saint Domingo, the illegitimate son of a French marquis and a negress, Marie Cessette Dumas. Alexandre Dumas arrived in Paris when he was twenty-one, penniless and unknown. Two years afterwards his first play, written in collaboration with Leuven, was produced at the Ambigu-Comique. For a year or two he wrote nothing but farces, probably



because they were most easily marketed. It was from the production of a series of Shakespearean plays in Paris by Charles Kean in English, that Dumas received the impetus to romance. Until the twenties of last century Shakespeare was neglected by the French. Voltaire had sneered at him as a barbarian, and writers reared on the cold classic traditions of Racine were either ignorant of Shakespeare altogether or regarded his plays as of small account. To the France, however, of the barren years that followed the end of the Napoleon adventure, regretting the years of glory and military thrills, the colour of Shakespeare came as revelation and relief in a drab age. The beginning of the romantic movement in French literature is associated with the names of Dumas, Victor Hugo, and the great critic Sainte-Beuve. It is referred to at greater length in another section. Here one need only note how these French writers were influenced first by Shakespeare and then by Scott. "The poet of the modern world," said Victor Hugo, "is not Racine, but Shakespeare or Molière; for the object of modern art is not Beauty but Life."

In the enthusiastic determination to displace classic formalism with "red blood," Hugo wrote *Cromwell* and *Hernani*, and Dumas wrote a whole series of romantic plays, all of which are now forgotten. One of these plays, *Richard Darlington*, was founded on Scott's *Chronicles of the Canongate*, and Dumas had certainly read many of the *Waverley* novels when he began, at the age of nearly forty, to write his great series of historical novels. Dumas, himself, was always eager to acknowledge his indebtedness. "Whenever I meet an Englishman," he once said, "I consider it my duty to be agreeable to him as part of the debt that I owe to Shakespeare and Walter Scott."

Dumas claimed that he wrote 1200 volumes. Most of his stories were written in collaboration, his best-known collaborator being Auguste Maquet. Even during his lifetime there was insistent discussion, to which Dumas appears to have been entirely indifferent, as to how much the novels owed to the collaborators and how much to him. After all, it would not matter much to us if Bacon had really written *Hamlet* and Maquet had written *The Three Musketeers*. The fact, however, was that any literary hack who was associated with Dumas became for the moment a genius.

Dumas has been accused of plagiarism, an accusation which he himself never took the trouble to deny. In his novels there is never a particularly well-defined plot, but his genius for creating characters that attract and hold the interest, and almost the affection, of his readers is nearly equal to that of Dickens. His invention never failed. He was the master of witty dialogue and a matchless inventor of dramatic situations.

It has been well said of him that he wanted "no more than a room in an inn, where people meet in riding cloaks, to move the soul with the last



degree of terror and pity." Stevenson loved D'Artagnan, and he loved him best in *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, when he had "mellowed into a man so witty, rough, kind, and upright that he takes the heart by storm." But perhaps it is the young D'Artagnan, the needy Gascon adventurer, that most of the world adores. How vividly he is made to live!

"Imagine Don Quixote at eighteen; Don Quixote without his corselet, without his coat of mail, without his cuisses; Don Quixote clothed in a woollen doublet, the blue colour of which had faded into a nameless shade between lees of wine and a heavenly azure; face long and brown; high cheek-bones, indicating craftiness; the maxillary muscles enormously developed, an infallible sign by which a Gascon may always be detected even without his cap—and our young man wore a cap ornamented with a kind of feather; his eye, open and intelligent; his nose hooked, but finely chiselled. Too big for a youth, too small for a grown man, an experienced eye might have taken him for a farmer's son upon a journey, had it not been for the long sword, which, dangling from a leathern baldric, hit against its owner's calves as he walked and against his steed's rough side when he was on horseback."

And how fully justified is Stevenson's admiration: "Here, and throughout, if I am to choose virtues for myself or my friends, let me choose the virtues of D'Artagnan. I do not say there is no character as well drawn in Shakespeare; I do not say there is none that I love so wholly. There are many spiritual eyes that seem to spy upon our actions—eyes of the dead and the absent, whom we imagine to behold us in our most private hours, and whom we fear and scruple to offend: our witnesses and judges. And among these, even if you should think me childish, I must count my D'Artagnan—not D'Artagnan of the memoirs whom Thackeray pretended to prefer—a preference, I take the freedom of saying, in which he stands alone; not the D'Artagnan of flesh and blood, but him of the ink and paper; not nature's, but Dumas's. And this is the particular crown and triumph of the artist—not to be true merely, but to be lovable; not simply to convince, but to enchant."

Dumas's *The Three Musketeers* retains its place in England as one of the most popular romances ever published. D'Artagnan is as well known to us as Hamlet. The three musketeers, Athos, Aramis, and Porthos, are as familiar as Sam Weller and Tom Jones. The adventures of D'Artagnan are told in a trilogy, *The Three Musketeers*, *Twenty Years After*, and *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*. These three, with the Valois cycle—*Queen Margot*, *The Dame de Montsoreau*, and *The Forty-Five*—and that gorgeous romance, *Monte Cristo*, are the Dumas masterpieces. The first trilogy gives an amazing picture of the France of Louis XIII and Louis XIV, inaccurate maybe in dull facts but realistic in its colour and atmosphere. The second cycle



does the same thing for the France of the Saint Bartholomew's Day era. *Monte Cristo* is a book without a peer. It is far too long. The second volume is extravagant melodrama. But the first volume is magnificent. The escape of Dantès from the Château D'If is one of the most exciting incidents in all literature.

Edmond de Goncourt has left a striking picture of Dumas, as he was towards the end of his life :

"He is a sort of giant, with a negro's hair now turned pepper-and-salt, with a little hippopotamus-like eye, clear and sharp, and which watches even when it seems covered over, and an enormous face with features resembling the vaguely hemispherical outlines which caricaturists introduce into their versions of the moon. There is, I cannot say how, something about him of a showman, or of a traveller from *The Thousand and One Nights*. He talks a great deal without much brilliancy, without much biting quality, and without much colour ; he only gives us facts, curious facts, paradoxical facts, stunning facts, which he draws with a hoarse voice from an immense store of memories. And he talks always of himself, himself, himself, but with a childlike vanity in which there is nothing irritating. He tells us, for example, that an article of his on Mount Carmel brought the monks there 700,000 francs (£28,000). He drinks neither wine nor coffee ; he does not smoke ; he is the sober athlete of articles and newspaper copy."

Dumas worked even harder than Scott, and for years his income was considerable. As De Goncourt has pointed out, his personal habits were simple. He neither smoked, drank, nor gambled, and, though he was fond of cooking, Albert Vandam tells us that his favourite dish was "the beef from the soup of the previous day grilled." Yet he was always penniless. He once described himself as a *panier percé*, a basket with holes in it. Crowds of worthless men and women battered on him. He kept open house, and he often did not even know the names of the people who dined with him. At one time he kept a special secretary, called Hirschler, to attend to the writs with which he was constantly served. On one occasion a bailiff arrived at Dumas's apartments, and greeted his secretary as an old acquaintance. Indeed, he had an intimate acquaintance with every process-server in Paris. After gossiping for a few minutes the bailiff told the secretary that he had come to distrain.

"Really," said Hirschler, "I did not know that things had gone as far as that. I must look into the matter."

It was a custom of the house to throw all law documents into one of the kitchen drawers. Hirschler went through the documents, found the bill in question, and suggested that the bailiff should accept payment of a third on account. This was agreed to, and the man of law was given an

admirable lunch while messengers were sent to Dumas's various publishers to collect the money.

This kind of thing was a daily happening, and it is suggested that many of the novelist's debts were paid five or six times over.

Alexandre Dumas died in December 1870. His one son, Alexandre Dumas *filis*, was the result of his father's liaison with Marie Labay, a Parisian dressmaker, and was legitimised when he was seven. The younger Dumas strongly disapproved of the vagaries of his prodigal father.

Even more strongly influenced by Scott than was Dumas was Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873), whose *The Betrothed*, published in 1825-1827, is the Italian novel best known outside of Italy—and inside it, too! This historical romance (almost too realistic in parts, for instance in the plague scenes, to be called a romance) of life in Milan, under Spanish rule, in the seventeenth century is the first really good Italian novel. Its debt to Scott, whom Manzoni delighted to honour, is great: but so also is its originality. Manzoni was also a poet, he wrote stirring odes and eloquent hymns; and a dramatist, who wrote two tragedies in a manner that adapts French romantic tragedy to Italian needs.

## § 5

## VICTOR HUGO

Victor Hugo was born in Besançon, capital of the department of Doubs, in the year 1802. His father was a general in the army, but his grandfather was a carpenter, and, further back, his ancestors were peasants of the soil. As a boy he had three masters—so he tells us—a garden, an old priest, and his mother. But he had that within him which no master can impart, a seed of poetry which broke forth in early flower. At fifteen he sent a poem to the French Academy which gained him the title of "the sublime child." Another prize poem, a hundred and twenty lines in length, was written at a single sitting. So early and so great was the facility in writing which was to make of him the greatest improvisator the world has ever seen! Victor Hugo, when he died, was not so much a man as a literature.

In 1822 these poems were, with others, republished in a book, the sale of which brought him in a little money. What was more important, they caught the fancy of the king, who bestowed upon the youthful poet a pension of forty pounds a year. On this wealth he married. His bride was the daughter of next-door neighbours, Adèle Foucher, who, as a



dark, vivid little beauty, had often been his playmate in his father's garden.

He now settled down to earn a living with his pen. Romances, plays, and poems poured from him in a cataract. In 1829 appeared *Les Orientales*, one of the most dazzling volumes ever written in the world. His reputation as a great new poet was no more in doubt. To other men of budding genius—Gautier, Balzac, Delacroix, Sainte-Beuve, De Musset, Mérimée, Dumas—he became a kind of idol. Gautier has related how, having obtained an introduction, he mounted, trembling, to the poet's flat, how, like De Quincey at the door of Wordsworth, he thrice retreated, how at last he screwed his courage up to knock, how he was welcomed by the young man with the serene pale face and falcon eyes, "and brow that looked as if it might have worn the crown or laurel-garland of a Cæsar or a god."

Now, what was it in these poems which awoke such homage? Let us recall the words of Théodore de Banville, himself a fine and gifted poet:

At times there appears a new work by Victor Hugo, and everything lights up, resounds, murmurs, sings. The shining, sounding, fascinating verse, with its thousand surprises of tone, of colour, of harmony, breaks forth like a rich concert. Every moment he adds something new to that swing of syllables, that melodious play of rhyme, which is the grace and the glory of the poetry of France.

That is rightly said. Everything is *new*—new in life and colour, in gorgeous imagery, above all in that haunting music which inspired the lines of Swinburne:

But we, our Master, we  
Whose hearts, uplift to thee,  
*Ache with the pulse of thy remembered song.*

And then it is, emphatically, the poetry of the Muse who is "the singing maid with *pictures* in her eyes." When he rises from the *Orientales* the reader's mind is filled with pictures, as if he had been walking round a gallery of paintings. He sees the sultan in his palace, surrounded by his lovely ladies, refusing to be comforted for the death of his pet tiger. He sees the young girl Sara, after bathing, dreaming naked in her swing, while a fly alights upon her rosy skin as on a flower. He sees the Cloud of Fire, driven by the voice of God, passing over sea and land, over Egypt, over the Pyramids, the Sphinx of rosy granite, the yellow Nile, the wilderness of sands, the Tower of Babel with the eagles round it like a swarm of bees, until, when the Voice from heaven cries "halt" at Nineveh, it falls—and the scented singing city, with all its scenes of joyous sin, becomes a

furnace of consuming fire. He sees—or rather, hears—the djinns, those evil spirits, coming from afar at midnight over another sleeping city :

Murs, ville,  
Et port,  
Asile  
De mort,  
Mer grise  
Où brise  
La brise,  
Tout dort.

The lines of each succeeding stanza grow longer and longer until the swarm comes rushing like a tempest overhead—then slowly dies away, even as the ebbing verse appears to die away, into the space and silence of the night.

It was such miracles of verse as this which caused somebody to speak of Victor Hugo as the Paganini of poetry. It might be more aptly said that he was as much the unique master of the orchestra of verse as Wagner of the orchestra of sound.

From these gorgeous pictures of the East he turned nearer home. The succeeding volumes—*Leaves of Autumn*, *Songs of the Twilight*, *Inner Voices*, *Sunshine and Shadows*, *Contemplations*—have for themes the simple things that touch the lives of every child of man. Some of the simplest are the sweetest : a mother dreaming by her baby's cradle, a lover singing at his lady's window, a child talking to her doll. But in *Les Châtiments* he put forth a book of satires—fierce attacks upon "Napoleon the Little," and other objects of his hate and scorn—full of fire and fury, but, as it seems to us to-day, much of it invective overdone. Yet much also had all the skill and lightness with which Pope held up Atticus to ridicule and Dryden thrust his rapier into Zimri.

Apart from his successive works—his poems, plays, romances—three chief events marked Victor Hugo's life. In 1841 he was elected to the French Academy. In 1845 he was made a peer of France. In the *coup d'état* of 1851 he was expelled from Paris ; a price was set upon his head, and he fled to Jersey, where, and afterwards in Guernsey, he made his home. There he put forth the greatest of his works, *The Legend of the Ages*, and another, one of the most beautiful, *The Art of Being a Grandfather*.

The first, and finest, volume of *The Legend of the Ages* takes the reader, in a series of most vivid scenes, through the Ages of the world. It opens with Eve sitting by a lake in Eden, dreaming of the day when Paradise itself would be diviner with the coming of that strange, new thing, a child. It closes with a terrific vision of the Angel of the Judgment setting to his lips the trump of doom. In between, we have such scenes as that of Daniel, in his white shroud, saying, "Peace be with you, lions !"—of



Ruth at the feet of Boaz, gazing at the moon, which some mighty reaper had thrown down, a golden sickle, in the starfields of the sky—of Eviradnus, the knight-errant, rescuing a lovely lady in an enchanted forest of romance—of Zim-zizimi, the great sultan, sitting on his throne, alone, after the splendour of the feast is over, when the rose-crowned sphinxes of white marble begin to speak. One by one they tell him of the doom of the great rulers of the world before him—of Nimrod, whose name was set upon the Tower of Babel; of Chem, whose colossal statue was of solid gold; of Cyrus, who drove four kings in harness; of Cleopatra, who bewitched the world. In terror and despair the sultan dashes down the lamp. "Then Night came in and took him by the hand and bade him 'Come!'"

In striking contrast to these large and splendid pictures is *The Art of Being a Grandfather*—a book of the most sweet and tender studies of child life. Little Georges and Jeanne are five and six years old. In one poem, he takes them to the Jardin des Plantes. He marks their serious rosy faces gazing at the black mask of the tiger, with his eyes like two holes looking into hell. He jots down carefully their wise remarks—that the boa-constrictor has no clothes on—that the horns of the elephant are in his mouth—that you will do well to be careful, or he will beat you with his nose. In another poem he relates how Jeanne was shut up in the cupboard on dry bread, how he was detected by her mother in the act of smuggling to the prisoner a pot of jam, how he was told that he deserved to be shut up in a cupboard also, and how Jeanne, looking up at him with soft eyes shining, whispered, "Then, Grandpa, I will bring a pot of jam."

There are more majestic verses in the world that we could better spare.

We have dwelt upon the side of Victor Hugo's work which we think is the most likely to survive. But there is another side which we must touch on. It is to be lamented that, as the years went by, he came to regard himself, not only as a great poet, which he was, but as a great philosopher, which he was not. More and more, large portions of his work were "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." It is not too much to say that he has left us reams of rhetoric, of melodrama, and of extravaganza, which no man at the present day can read at all. But it is no less true that he has left us pictures that no poet ever equalled except Keats, lyrics as full of melody as Shelley's, and, at times, an "ocean-roll of rhythm" which is all his own.

## § 6

Although Victor Hugo lives mainly as a poet, the greatest in the literature of France, his prose works have given him an even wider fame outside his own country. Prose is more translatable than poetry, and the



readers of prose romances will always be more numerous than the readers of poems, however fine they may be.

It was as a playwright, stimulated at the beginning by a series of Shakespearean performances given in Paris by Kean, that Hugo may be said to have begun the romantic movement in France, but he ceased to write for the stage about the year 1858. Despite the splendour of their verse, his plays are essentially melodramatic and are now rarely revived, though *Hernani*, *Le Roi s'Amuse*, and *Lucrece Borgia* have an important place in dramatic literature. Hugo's prose-writing includes *Notre Dame de Paris*, *Les Misérables*, *L'Homme qui Rit*, *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*, *Quatre-vingt Treize*, the fierce attack on Napoleon III which he called *Napoléon le Petit*, *L'Année Terrible*, an account of the events of 1870, and a volume of criticism which he called *William Shakespeare*. Of these, the early work *Notre Dame de Paris*, the great romance *Les Misérables*, published in 1862 while Victor Hugo was an exile in Guernsey, and *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* are of the greatest interest and importance.

Hugo was an intensely patriotic Frenchman and an equally patriotic Parisian, and in *Notre Dame de Paris* he has painted a vivid picture of the life of a mediæval city which had its scene and its pivot in the great cathedral which enshrined the city's dreams, and was in the Middle Ages, as it still is to some extent, the city's soul. In this romance, written when he was under thirty, Victor Hugo showed himself a disciple of Walter Scott. The principal characters of the story are Quasimodo, a hunchback, twisted in body but loyal in soul; Esmeralda, the steadfast heroine; and Claude Frollo, who is a sort of melodramatic Faust.

Quasimodo's overmastering love for the cathedral is beautifully described in the following passage from *Notre Dame*:

After all, he never turned his face to the world of men save with regret; his cathedral was enough for him. It was peopled with marble figures, kings, saints, and bishops, who at least did not laugh at him, and never looked upon him otherwise than with peace and good-will. The other statues, those of monsters and demons, did not hate Quasimodo; he looked too much like them for that. They rather mocked at other men. The saints were his friends and blessed him. The monsters were his friends and protected him. Thus he had long conversations with them. He would sometimes pass whole hours squatting before one of these statues, in solitary chat with it. If anyone came by he would fly like a lover surprised in his serenade. . . .

But that which he loved more than all else in the motherly building, that which awakened his soul and bade it spread its poor stunted wings folded in such misery where it dwelt in darkness, that which sometimes actually made him happy, was the bells. He loved them, he caressed them, he talked to them, he understood them. From the chime in the steeple over the transept to the big bell above the door, he had a tender feeling for them all. The belfry of the transept



and the two towers were to him like three great cages, in which the birds, trained by him, sang for him alone ; and yet it was these very bells which made him deaf. But mothers often love that child best which has cost them most pain. . . .

It is impossible to give any idea of his joy on those days when full peals were rung. When the archdeacon dismissed him with the word "Go," he ran up the winding staircase more rapidly than anyone else could have gone down. He reached the aerial chamber of the big bell, breathless ; he gazed at it an instant with love and devotion, then spoke to it gently, and patted it, as you would a good horse about to take a long journey. He condoled with it on the hard work before it. After these initiatory caresses he called to his assistants, stationed on a lower storey of the tower, to begin. They then hung upon the ropes, the windlass creaked, and the enormous mass of metal moved slowly. Quasimodo, panting with excitement, followed it with his eye. The first stroke of the clapper upon its brazen wall made the beam on which he stood quiver. Quasimodo vibrated with the bell. "Here we go ! There we go !" he shouted with a mad burst of laughter. But the motion of the great bell grew faster and faster, and as it traversed an ever-increasing space, his eye grew bigger and bigger, more and more glittering and phosphorescent. At last the full peal began ; the whole tower shook ; beams, leads, broad stones all rumbled together, from the piles of the foundation to the trefoils at the top. Then Quasimodo's rapture knew no bounds : he came and went ; he trembled and shook from head to foot with the tower. The bell, let loose, and frantic with liberty, turned its jaws of bronze to either wall of the tower in turn—jaws from which issued that whirlwind whose roar men heard for four leagues around. Quasimodo placed himself before those gaping jaws ; he rose and fell with the swaying of the bell, inhaled its tremendous breath, gazed now at the abyss swarming with people like ants, two hundred feet below him, and now at the huge copper clapper which from second to second bellowed in his ear. That was the only speech which he could hear, the only sound that broke the universal silence reigning around him. He basked in it as a bird in the sunshine. All at once the frenzy of the bell seized him ; his look became strange ; he waited for the passing of the bell as a spider lies in wait for a fly, and flung himself headlong upon it. Then, suspended above the gulf, launched upon the tremendous vibration of the bell, he grasped the brazen monster by its ears, clasped it with his knees, spurred it with his heels, doubling the fury of the peal with the whole force and weight of his body. As the tower shook, he shouted and gnashed his teeth, his red hair stood erect, his chest laboured like a blacksmith's bellows, his eyes flashed fire, the monstrous steed neighed and panted under him ; and then the big bell of Notre Dame and Quasimodo ceased to exist ; they became a dream, a whirlwind, a tempest ; vertigo astride of uproar ; a spirit clinging to a winged crupper ; a strange centaur, half man, half bell ; a sort of horrid Astolpho, borne aloft by a prodigious hippogriff of living bronze.

The story itself is definitely artificial, but the book has outstanding value for its exact picture of mediæval city life.

*Les Misérables* came thirty years later. Hugo had taken a considerable part in the troubled politics of his country, changing his opinions often, and moving steadily to the left ; and his vehement opposition to Napoleon III

had meant banishment from the city that he loved and where he had already become a sort of literary god. It is curious and interesting that at this most unhappy period of a long and generally triumphant life, Hugo should have written the great romance of pity and sympathy. There is no more human and attractive character in fiction than Jean Valjean, the man of fine character, with a capacity for almost limitless self-sacrifice, forced by the pressure of circumstances to a life of crime, and after his reclamation hunted back to shame and suffering by the unescapable past. The benevolent simple-minded bishop to whom Jean Valjean owes his conversion is another splendid figure. All through the book, indeed, Hugo is concerned with the goodness of the individual and the cruelty of organised society.

The third of Victor Hugo's great romances is *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*, which was also written in exile in the Channel Islands. Jersey is the scene of this prose poem, which is concerned with the ceaseless struggle between the powers of nature and the soul of man.

Victor Hugo lived to a great old age, holding a position of reverence in the Paris of the early days of the last century similar to that held later in England by Thomas Hardy, and in France by Anatole France. Swinburne had an immense enthusiasm for his writing, and it is at least partly due to the enthusiasm of the English poet that Hugo's genius has been so fully recognised in England.

Like Hugo, little influenced by Scott was Gustav Freytag, "the master [German] novelist of the [nineteenth] century, by virtue of output, quality, and popularity" (G. Waterhouse), who wrote an impressive novel-cycle, published in 1872-1880, an independent novel, *Custom and Property*, 1850, and an excellent comedy, *The Journalists*, 1855. "He stands monumentally on the boundary between Romanticism and Realism" (Waterhouse). He was close on eighty when he died in 1895.



## READING LIST

Excellent editions of the Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott are published by the Oxford University Press, in the Oxford Standard Authors and the Oxford Poets. There are, of course, a great many editions of Sir Walter Scott's novels. Messrs. A. & C. Black publish practically the whole series, while many volumes can also be obtained in such editions as the Everyman's Library (Dent). The best Life is that by Sir Herbert Grierson, published by Constable.

ALEXANDRE DUMAS : The principal novels of Alexandre Dumas can be obtained in English in Messrs. Dent's Everyman's Library.

For a good account of Dumas's work, see Saintsbury's *A History of French Literature* (Macmillan).

ALESSANDRO MANZONI : *The Betrothed*, translated by Archibald Colquhoun (Dent).

VICTOR HUGO : The following are obtainable in Dent's Everyman's Library : *Les Misérables*, 2 vols. ; *Notre Dame*, 1 vol. ; *Toilers of the Sea*, 1 vol.

Plays : *Hernani*, *Ruy Blas*, and *The King's Diversions*, in 1 vol., in Bohn's Library (Bell).

A. C. Swinburne's *A Study of Victor Hugo* (Heinemann).

W. H. Hudson's *Victor Hugo and his Poetry* (Harrap).

Madame Duclaux's *Victor Hugo* in the series *Makers of the Nineteenth Century* (Constable).

## XXVIII

### EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY ESSAYISTS

#### § I

CHARLES LAMB

IN the chapter on Addison and Steele, it was remarked that the first decades of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries alike witnessed new births in the Essay as a form in our literature. We have now to deal briefly with the second of these periods: the period of Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, Thomas De Quincey, and Leigh Hunt.

Of these four men, Lamb remains the most beloved, and, as Saintsbury has remarked, "more nearly unique," not only among his contemporaries, but in all our prose literature.

Charles Lamb is for those who love Charles Lamb, and for no one else, and his style is for those who can savour it and for no others. As Canon Ainger says of the man: "Thoroughly to understand and enjoy Charles Lamb, one must have come to entertain a feeling towards him almost like personal affection. . . . It is necessary to come to the study of his writing in entire trustfulness, and having first cast aside all prejudice." Of his style he says, "It evades analysis. One might as well seek to account for the perfume of lavender, or the flavour of quince." To these judgments may be added that of another distinguished critic, Augustine Birrell: "I run no great risk in asserting that, of all English authors, Charles Lamb is the one loved most warmly and emotionally by his readers."

Elia, to give him his chosen name in literature, was born on February 10, 1775, in a house still standing, and marked by a tablet, in Crown Office Row, in the Temple. At that time an unpolluted Thames washed the southern boundary of the Temple Gardens. "A man would give something to be born in such places," Lamb writes in his essay, *The Old Benchers*.

He was the son of John and Elizabeth Lamb, his father being clerk and factotum to Mr. Samuel Salt, a Bencher of the Inner Temple. In the essay just mentioned Lamb draws a touching and beautifully convincing character-sketch of his father under the name of Lovel.

I knew this Lovel. He was a man of an incorrigible and losing honesty. A good fellow withal, and "would strike." In the cause of the oppressed he never



considered inequalities, or calculated the number of his opponents. He once wrested a sword out of the hand of a man of quality that had drawn upon him, and pummelled him severely with the hilt of it. The swordsman had offered insult to a female—an occasion upon which no odds against him would have prevented the interference of Lovel. He would stand next day bareheaded to the same person, modestly to excuse his interference, for Lovel never forgot rank, where something better was not concerned. . . . Lovel was the liveliest little fellow breathing . . . had the merriest quips and conceits, and was altogether brimful of rogueries and inventions as you could desire. He was a brother of the angle, moreover, and just such a free, honest companion as Mr. Izaak Walton would have chosen to go a-fishing with.

It is a pity that it is necessary to curtail this portrait of the father, from whom, as Ainger says, Charles inherited his versatility, chivalry, and tenderness.

Although it is impossible to know too much about Charles Lamb through his biographers and friends, all that is best worth knowing is to be found in his inimitable essays, contributed, mostly, to the *London Magazine*. These, in the finest and best sense, are egotistic. They contain the essence of his joys and sufferings, often veiled or disguised, even deliberately distorted (for he loved to mystify), but still the essence of all he knew and felt about life. You may read of his childish fears, superstitions, and haunting impressions in his *Witches and Other Night Fears*, *Dream Children: a Reverie*, *Blakesmoor in H—shire*, and *Mackery End in Hertfordshire*. His schooldays at Christ's Hospital, where he was the companion of Coleridge and Leigh Hunt, are described in another essay. His recollections of his first business post—for he was a man of business first all his life—are deliciously set forth in *The South Sea House*. His early experiences as an amateur journalist are known through his humorous reminiscent essay, *Newspapers Twenty-five Years Ago*. Nearly all the portraits he draws in his essays can be traced to their originals. His "cousins," James and Bridget Elia, are his brother John and his sister Mary. Mrs. Battle's "opinions on whist" were those of a real old lady, possibly his grandmother, Mrs. Field, but more probably (as E. V. Lucas argues) Sarah Burney, the wife of Lamb's friend, Rear-Admiral James Burney, and the queen of a whist-playing circle. Ralph Bigod, the arch-borrower in *The Two Races of Men*, who believed that "money kept more than three days stinks," and who, in approaching a friend for a loan, "anticipated no excuse, and found none," was one John Fenwick, whom Lamb remembered from his old newspaper days. His beautiful story, *Barbara S—*, was an embellishment of real experience in the childhood of his friend, Miss Kelly, the actress. In his incomparably humorous and fanciful essay, *Amicus Redivivus*, he makes play with the eccentricities and absent-mindedness of his friend, George Dyer, whose character and habits gave him endless entertainment. Lamb, indeed, wove his own fancies and wreathed



his memories round the men and women he had loved, the books in which he had read deepest, and the places and scenes with which he had been longest familiar. Nor did he exclude himself from his gallery of portraits. To the second series of his Essays he prefixed an account of himself purporting to be a tribute to "the late Elia," but really, of course, a playful yet penetrating study of his own character and way of life. There were elements in Lamb of which we commonly hear less than the truth; for he had his awkward sides, and he sometimes pushed his predilections and dislikes rather far. He writes of his failings with a humorous self-knowledge all his own.

Few understood him, and I am not certain that at all times he quite understood himself. He too much affected that dangerous figure—irony. He sowed doubtful speeches and reaped plain, unequivocal hatred. He would interrupt the gravest discussion with some light jest, and yet, perhaps, not quite irrelevant in ears that could understand it. Your long and much talkers hated him. The informal habit of his mind, joined to an inveterate impediment of speech, forbade him to be an orator, and he seemed determined that no one else should play that part when he was present. He was *petit* and ordinary in his person and appearance. I have seen him sometimes in what is called good company, but where he has been a stranger, sit silent, and be suspected for an odd fellow, till, some unlucky occasion provoking it, he would stutter out some senseless pun (not altogether senseless perhaps, if rightly taken), which has stamped his character for the evening. It was hit or miss with him; but nine times out of ten he continued to send away a whole company his enemies. . . . He had a horror, which he carried to a foible, of looking like anything important or parochial. He thought that he approached nearer to that stamp daily. He had a general aversion from being treated like a grave or respectable character, and kept a wary eye upon the advances of age that should so entitle him. He herded always, while it was possible, with people younger than himself. . . . The impressions of infancy had burnt into him, and he resented the impertinence of manhood. These were weaknesses; but, such as they were, they are a key to explicate some of his writings.

But here are elements both of exaggeration and suppression. Lamb never made enemies, as Hazlitt did; on the contrary, he grappled his friends to him with hoops of steel. They might sometimes resent, but they never forsook. And this self-drawn portrait is deficient in one most vital element. It tells us nothing of the dark and oft-returning thunder-cloud under which Charles Lamb worked, and wrote, and talked all his days. There was a terrible taint of insanity in his family. He had one fit of it himself, but was saved from another by his responsibilities, accepted to the full and with unfailing devotion, for his sister Mary who, in an outbreak of madness, had slain their mother. After her first cure, she was committed to his care, but her returns to hospital were frequent over many years. His father, too, died in imbecility.



When the tragedy occurred Lamb was a young clerk in the service of the East India Company, in Leadenhall Street. He disliked his work thoroughly, but did it well and truly for thirty-three years, after which service he was awarded a generous pension. Lamb, therefore, was never an author by profession. Indeed, it may be said, he was never anything "by profession." He thought his own thoughts and found his own way through a life of toil and sorrow. Some kindly light, responsive to a light within him, led him on. He never married. Undoubtedly he had loved the "Alice W——n" of his beautiful *Dream Children: a Reverie*. He had worshipped, but only at a distance, the young Pentonville Quakeress of whom he wrote his beautiful lines, *Hester*, of which these are the last:

My sprightly neighbour, gone before  
To that unknown and silent shore,  
Shall we not meet, as heretofore,  
Some summer morning,

When from thy cheerful eyes a ray  
Hath struck a bliss upon the day,  
A bliss that would not go away,  
A sweet forewarning?

But as early as 1796, when he was twenty-one, he had accepted singleness. Of marriage he wrote to Coleridge: "It is a passion of which I retain nothing. . . . Thank God, the folly has left me for ever. Not even a review of my love verses renews one wayward wish in me." Strange to say—and it is a very late discovery—Lamb did, more than twenty years later, when he was forty-four and receiving a salary of £600 a year, make a proposal of marriage to Fanny Kelly, the actress. Her affections were engaged; she refused his written offer with tenderness and gratitude, and, as E. V. Lucas says, "his little romance was over, a single day seeing the whole drama played."

Lamb's private joys were all in old books, good talk, and friendships that were sincere but never too fastidious. He hated profession, humbug, and every kind of pose. He preferred to belittle his faith rather than declare it. In the following passage from his essay *New Year's Eve*, we have the essence of Charles Lamb's character and expressive power. He is writing on that subject—inexhaustible as life—the approach of death.

In proportion as the years both lessen and shorten, I set more count upon their periods, and would fain lay my ineffectual finger upon the spoke of the great wheel. I am not content to pass away "like a weaver's shuttle." Those metaphors solace me not, nor sweeten the unpalatable draught of mortality. I care not to be carried with the tide, that smoothly bears human life to eternity, and reluct at the inevitable course of destiny. I am in love with this green earth;

the face of town and country : the unspeakable rural solitudes and the sweet security of streets. I would set up my tabernacles here. I am content to stand still at the age to which I am arrived. . . . I do not want . . . to drop, like mellow fruit, as they say, into the grave. Any alteration, on this earth of mine . . . puzzles and discomposes me . . . a new state of being staggers me. Sun, and sky, and breeze, and solitary walks, and summer holidays, and the greenness of fields, and the delicious juices of meats and fishes, and society and the cheerful, glass, and candle-light, and fireside conversations, and innocent vanities, and jests, and *irony itself*—do these things go out with Life ?

All that Lamb himself knew of these good things of life went out with him on December 27, 1834, when he died in his last home at Edmonton, and was carried to his long home in Edmonton Churchyard.

## § 2

## WILLIAM HAZLITT

When William Hazlitt, perhaps the most incisive and variously endowed of English essayists, died in his lodging at 6 Frith Street, Soho, on September 18, 1830, at the age of fifty-two, he surprised those at his bedside—among whom was Charles Lamb—by saying, “ Well, I’ve had a happy life.” For his life had not contained many of those elements which we commonly associate with happiness. He had more than once formed mistaken estimates of his true vocation and had suffered accordingly. He had been twice married ; to be divorced by his first wife, and deserted by his second. He had quarrelled much, and had estranged many friends. But he had been ever a fighter, and had lived and thought intensely : therein was his happiness. Augustine Birrell puts the truth broadly when he says : “ William Hazlitt had to take a thrashing from life. He took it standing up like a man, not lying down like a cur ; but take it he had to do. . . . He reaped what he sowed, and it proved a sorry harvest.”

Hazlitt was the son of a Unitarian minister of some distinction, who, at the time of his son William’s birth, presided over a meeting-house at Maidstone. Later, after a rather terrible period in America, the family was at Walworth, London, near the old Montpelier Tea-gardens. Hazlitt was now nine, and the earliest and freshest of his memories to be found in his writings concern this spot. In his essay *Why Distant Objects Please*, he has this passage which may be quoted as an excellent example of his style—a style always marked, as here, by gusto and felicitous quotation :

When I was quite a boy, my father used to take me to the Montpelier Tea-gardens at Walworth. Do I go there now ? No ; the place is deserted, and its borders and its beds o’erturned. Is there, then, nothing that can



“ Bring back the hour  
Of glory in the grass, of splendour in the flower ” ?

Oh ! yes. I unlock the casket of memory, and draw back the warders of the brain ; and there this scene of my infant wanderings still lives unfaded, or with fresher dyes. A new sense comes upon me, as in a dream ; a richer perfume, brighter colours start out ; my eyes dazzle ; my heart heaves with its new load of bliss, and I am a child again. My sensations are all glossy, spruce, voluptuous, and fine : they wear a candied coat, and are in holiday trim. . . . All that I have observed since, of flowers and plants, and grass plots, and of suburb delight, seems to me borrowed from “ that first garden of my innocence ”—to be slips and scions stolen from that bed of memory. In this manner the darlings of our childhood burnish out in the after years, and derive their sweetest perfume from the first heartfelt sigh of pleasure breathed upon them,

“ like the sweet south,  
That breathes upon a bank of violets,  
Stealing and giving odour ! ”

The elder Hazlitt settled definitely, at last, at Wem, in Shropshire, where for twenty-five years he remained in charge of a small Unitarian community, and here his son's youth, up to the age of twenty-two, was spent. He became his father's pupil and, more and more, also, his intellectual companion. Browsing in his library of theological and metaphysical books, and taking long solitary walks in the country, the boy acquired a strong bent toward philosophical and metaphysical inquiry which was to a certain extent to prove a misleading road in his life. But his discursive reading now took in fiction, as we learn from his essay *On Reading Old Books*. We see the birth of Hazlitt's critical genius in such a passage as this, with its rapture and unction :

Ah ! never again shall I feel the enthusiastic delight with which I gazed at the figures, and anticipated the story and adventures of Major Bath and Commodore Trunnion, of Trim and my Uncle Toby, of Don Quixote and Sancho and Dapple, of Gil Blas and Dame Lorenza Sephora, of Laura and the fair Lucretia, whose lips open and shut like buds of roses. To what nameless ideas did they give rise,—with what airy delights I filled up the outlines, as I hung in silence over the page !—Let me still recall them, that they may breathe fresh life into me, and that I may live that birthday of thought and romantic pleasure over again ! Talk of the *ideal* ! This is the only true ideal—the heavenly tints of Fancy reflected in the bubbles that float upon the spring-tide of human life.

“ O Memory ! shield me from the world's poor strife,  
And give those scenes thine everlasting life ! ”

In how many a young man has the love of literature been kindled by Hazlitt when he writes like this ! Such inspiring and awakening passages abound in Hazlitt's essays. No beginner on them should delay to read



*My First Acquaintance with Poets*, in which he relates his first meeting, as a youth, with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who was his father's visitor to Wem. His description of his walk with the poet-philosopher between Wem and Shrewsbury is for ever memorable. Recalling it, he says :

Would that I could go back to what I then was ! Why can one not revive past times as one can revisit old places ? If I had the quaint muse of Sidney to assist me, I would write a "Sonnet to the Road between Wem and Shrewsbury," and immortalise every step of it by some fond enigmatical conceit. I would swear that the very milestones had ears, and that Harmer Hill stooped with all its pines to listen to a poet as he passed ! . . . On my way back, I had a sound in my ears—it was the voice of Fancy ; I had a light before me—it was the face of Poetry.

Yet when Hazlitt had to step out into the practical world and shape a career, it was to art, not to literature, that he looked for joy and reward. His brother John was an artist of ability, who had studied under Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Hazlitt wished to be an artist too. His studies in Paris, and his first dreams among masterpieces, can be only referred to here. He had to recognise that he was not much better fitted to be a painter than to be a minister. Art was to be his unfulfilled dream and happy retrospect. His essays gave him not half the pleasure that he had sacrificed when he at last laid down his brush in despair. But when he ceased to be an artist, he had become our earliest stimulating art-critic. Those who wish to realise the joy which an artist takes in his work and, equally, the joy which the layman can get from it, should read his essays *On the Pleasures of Painting*, *A Landscape of Nicolas Poussin*, *On the Picturesque and Ideal*, *The Old Age of Artists*, *A Portrait of an English Lady by Vandyke*, and his wonderfully reported *Conversations of James Northcote, R.A.*

In 1808, when he was thirty, Hazlitt married Miss Stoddart, a sister of Dr. Stoddart, who became editor of *The Times*. They settled at Winterslow, near Salisbury, where they shortly received a visit from Charles and Mary Lamb. Four years later they removed to London, and to the house, No. 19 York Street, which had been one of the London homes of Milton. Hazlitt now needed literary employment, and he brought to the market the readiest of pens. He was also drawn to lecturing, and he gave a course of ten addresses on "The Rise and Progress of Modern Philosophy" at the Russell Institution. Later he gave courses of lectures on the "English Poets," the English "Comic Writers," and "The Age of Elizabeth." He soon found much work to do for the *Morning Chronicle* (many theatrical criticisms), the *Champion*, *The Times*, and the *Examiner*, in which his *Round Table* essays appeared. It was in these brilliant discursive essays that Hazlitt found himself. Later, in the *London Magazine* he began his *Table Talk* series, and later still his *Spirit of the Age* and *The Plain Speaker*.



In all these essays there is a wealth of ideas, of reflection, and of reminiscence, penetrating criticism, and prose eloquence that defies description. Birrell has remarked that Hazlitt's very titles "make you lick your lips." *On Genius and Common Sense, On People with One Idea, On Living to Oneself, On the Indian Jugglers, On Thought and Action, On Going a Journey, On Familiar Style, On the Knowledge of Character, On the Fear of Death, The Conversation of Authors, Envy, The Look of a Gentleman, Reading Old Books, Application to Study, The Spirit of Obligations, The Pleasure of Hating, Respectable People, Depth and Superficiality, Personal Character*—these are a few of them. To describe the varieties of writing, mood, and temper in these essays is impossible within the space here available. The worthwhileness of reading every page of Hazlitt's miscellaneous essays is admirably stated by George Saintsbury: "To anyone who has made a little progress in criticism himself, to anyone who has either read for himself or is capable of reading for himself, of being guided by what is helpful and of neglecting what is not, there is no greater critic than Hazlitt in any language, . . . he is the critics' critic as Spenser is the poets' poet."

On Hazlitt's domestic affairs it is unnecessary to dwell in a short appreciation. He had not long married his second wife when she announced that she would not return to him. Thereafter he lived a somewhat solitary life, embittered greatly by the fall of Napoleon, whom he had worshipped, and of whom he wrote a "Life," which is now little read: history was not his forte. He was estranged for a time even from his gentlest friend, Charles Lamb, who, however, during their separation wrote of him: "I should belie my own conscience if I said less than that I think W. H. to be, in his natural and healthy state, one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing."

## § 3

## THOMAS DE QUINCEY

Thomas De Quincey is one of the most original and, at the same time, one of the most irregular and, so to speak, "unmappable" writers in our literary history. "He had [says Saintsbury] a singular combination of exact scholarship with wide desultory reading; an entirely original faculty of narrative; a rare gift for exposition, either in summary of fact or concentration of argument; an intensely individual, though fitful, humour; and a hardly matched—a certainly unsurpassed—command of gorgeous rhetorical style."

Thomas De Quincey, born in 1785, was the son of a Manchester merchant, who traced his family to the Normandy village named Quincey.

He was sent to the Manchester Grammar School with a view to his winning a scholarship for Oxford. But his health went wrong, he was miserable, and finally he ran away, was chased by his relations, was more or less forgiven, and allowed to wander in Wales; then, under a new impulse of truancy he came to London, where he found lodgings in Soho and became a youthful outcast for a few years, during which he made strange friendships and formed the pathetic attachment to "Ann," of the Oxford Street pavements. Of her you may read in his *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, which, of all his voluminous writings, is the most wonderful.

Soon after his marriage, opium and love fought for the victory in De Quincey's life. A terrible chapter was opened. Is there anything in biography more pitiful than the picture he gives of his wife, lying by him and listening in distress to his dream-gabble until, as it grew less and less human, she would turn and cry, "Oh, what do you see, dear? What is it that you see?"

De Quincey has told us what he saw. "I seemed every night to descend, not metaphorically but literally to descend, into chasms and sunless abysses." He knew a terrifying enlargement of space; it swelled to infinity. Time, too, expanded in a manner incommunicable by words: "I sometimes seemed to have lived 70 or 100 years in one night." Vast architectures rose before him, challenging the stars, and mysterious lakes swooned away into seas and oceans. But the seas and oceans, which might have brought peace, changed into a cosmos of human faces:

Hitherto the human face had mixed often in my dreams, but not despotically, nor with any special power of tormenting. But now that which I have called the tyranny of the human face began to unfold itself. Perhaps some part of my London life might be answerable for this. Be that as it may, now it was that upon the rocking waters of the ocean the human face began to appear: the sea appeared paved with innumerable faces, upturned to the heavens; faces imploring, wrathful, despairing, surged upwards by thousands, by myriads, by generations, by centuries—my agitation was infinite—my mind tossed—and surged with the ocean.

This is but one of his gorgeously terrible pictures. As an essayist, De Quincey has his permanent place in English literature by reason of such compositions as *On Murder as One of the Fine Arts*, *The English Mail Coach*, *The Spanish Nun*, *Memorials of Grasmere*, and *Suspiria de Profundis*.

## § 4

## LEIGH HUNT

Henry James Leigh Hunt was more aerial than Lamb, but emptier of real matter; more discursively critical, if possible, than Hazlitt, but less



incisive and enduring. He was the butterfly in that garden. And he had a butterfly's love of the moment and of all that was gay and warm in life. He died at 41 High Street, Putney, in the same year as De Quincey—1859. In his last days he appeared to Nathaniel Hawthorne as "a beautiful and venerable old man." If he was beautiful, it was, doubtless, in large measure because he had loved things good and beautiful all his life. And he was a steadfast and even ingenuous lover of his fellow-men. As Charles Lamb said, "He was only at his ease in the old arms of humanity."

Neither in prose nor poetry did Leigh Hunt achieve any real greatness, but in both he was almost always winning and felicitous. And he was one of the best *tasters* of literature of his age. His most famous poem, undoubtedly, is "Abou Ben Adhem," with the well-remembered lines in which Abou, in his dream, addresses the recording angel :

What writest thou ?—The vision raised its head,  
And with a look made all of sweet accord,  
Answered : "The names of those who love the Lord."  
"And mine is one ?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"  
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,  
But cheerly still ; and said : "I pray thee then,  
Write me as one who loves his fellow-men."  
The angel wrote and vanished. The next night  
It came again with a great wakening light,  
And showed the names whom love of God had blessed,  
And lo ! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

In his essays, printed mostly in the *Reflector*, *Indicator*, *New Tatler*, and the *London Journal*, Leigh Hunt was a poet writing amiable and sunny prose. Widely read and gifted with a good memory and great facility of expression, he was ready at any time to accept Swift's challenge and write charmingly on a broomstick. Nothing, indeed, was too trivial for his pen. He would write about the weather, about shop windows, about walking-sticks, about London fog, about his airiest likes and dislikes, about anything in the world—but always with the idea of refreshing the commonplace and making people fall in love with life. Charles Lamb, who loved him, portrayed the man and the writer in two lines :

Wit, poet, proseman, partyman, translator,  
Hunt, thy best title yet is Indicator.

# READING LIST

This, the greatest period of the English essay—greater even than that of Addison and Steele—is very well described in Hugh Walker's *English Essays and Essayists* (Dent).

## CHARLES LAMB :

*The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, edited by E. V. Lucas (6 vols., including 2 vols. of Letters) (Methuen).

*The Best of Lamb*, compiled, with a preface, by E. V. Lucas (Methuen).

*The Essays of Elia*, 1 vol., in Dent's Everyman's Library.

Canon Ainger's *Charles Lamb*, in English Men of Letters (Macmillan).

E. V. Lucas's *Life of Charles Lamb*, 2 vols. (Methuen).

Edmund Blunden's *Charles Lamb and His Contemporaries* (Cambridge University Press).

## HAZLITT :

The following are obtainable in Dent's Everyman's Library :

*Lectures on the English Comic Writers*, 1 vol. ; *Table Talk*, 1 vol. ;

*Spirit of the Age and Lectures on the English Poets*, 1 vol. ; *Shakespeare's Characters*.

*Essays of Hazlitt*, edited by Arthur Beatty, 1 vol. (Harrap).

*Winterslow*, in the World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell's *Hazlitt* in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

*Life of William Hazlitt*, by P. Presland Howe, is the standard biography (Hamish Hamilton).

## DE QUINCEY :

*Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, 1 vol., in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

*The English Mail Coach and other Writings*, 1 vol., in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

*Literary Criticism* (Oxford University Press).

Masson's *De Quincey*, in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

H. A. Eaton's *Thomas de Quincey* (Oxford University Press).

## LEIGH HUNT :

*Essays and Sketches*, edited by R. B. Johnson in the World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

*Essays and Poems of Leigh Hunt*, selected and edited by R. B. Johnson, the Temple Library, 2 vols. (Dent).

*The Town*, edited by Austin Dobson in the World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

Cosmo Monkhouse's *Leigh Hunt* (Walter Scott Publishing Co.).



## XXIX

### VICTORIAN POETS

#### § I

#### ALFRED TENNYSON

**W**HAT is the truth about Tennyson? How has he stood the test of time? Pinnacled in his lifetime among the world's immortals, can we say that he has kept his pride of place? Is the splendour of his fame beginning to lack lustre? Some of our new critics seem to think so. Are they right?

As with every poet born, Tennyson possessed his points of weakness. "I am not sure," wrote Ruskin to him, "that I do not feel the art and finish in these poems a little more than I should like to feel them." That was to put his finger, very tenderly, upon the ailing spot. Tennyson was apt, as he himself was well aware :

To add and alter many times  
Till all is ripe and rotten.

His ambition, also, "to take the hiss out of the language," by leaving out the letter *s* whenever possible, and filling all his lines with liquid *l*'s and *m*'s, helped to make the syllables too luscious—over-ripe. It is not to be denied that the effect of this, in its extreme, is to convey a sense of something rich but savourless.

But he was seldom in extremes. Even in his early volumes, where this habit is most marked, there were poems which, in their own line, are not to be excelled in vivid beauty. One of these is *Mariana* :

With blackest moss the flower-plots  
Were thickly crusted, one and all ·  
The rusted nails fell from the knots  
That held the pear to the gable-wall.  
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange :  
Unlifted was the clinking latch ;  
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch  
Upon the lonely moated grange.  
She only said, " My life is dreary,  
He cometh not," she said ;  
She said, " I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead ! "

## THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

About a stone-cast from the wall  
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept  
And o'er it many, round and small,  
The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.  
Hard by a poplar shook alway,  
All silver-green with gnarled bark :  
For leagues no other tree did mark  
The level waste, the rounding gray.  
She only said, " My life is dreary,  
He cometh not," she said ;  
She said, " I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead ! "

Here Tennyson is already doing in his verse what the Pre-Raphaelites did afterwards in painting.

Among his early lines, also, was that limpid drop of poetry, so sensitive, so deeply felt :

A spirit haunts the year's last hours.  
Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers :  
To himself he talks ;  
For at eventide, listening earnestly,  
At his work you may hear him sob and sigh  
In the walks ;  
Earthward he boweth the heavy stalks  
Of the mouldering flowers :  
Heavily hangs the broad sunflower  
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly ;  
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,  
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

The air is damp, and hush'd, and close,  
As a sick man's room when he taketh repose  
An hour before death ;  
My very heart faints and my whole soul grieves  
At the moist rich smell of the rotting leaves,  
And the breath  
Of the fading edges of box beneath,  
And the year's last rose.  
Heavily hangs the broad sunflower  
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly ;  
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,  
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

When, a little later, he wrote *The Lady of Shalott*, he had already reached the summit of his powers—a summit on which he was to remain till he was nearly eighty :



A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,  
 He rode between the barley-sheaves,  
 The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,  
 And flamed upon the brazen greaves  
     Of bold Sir Lancelot.  
 A red-cross knight for ever kneeled  
 To a lady in his shield,  
 That sparkled on the yellow field,  
     Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather  
 Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather,  
 The helmet and the helmet-feather  
 Burned like one burning flame together,  
     As he rode down to Camelot.  
 As often thro' the purple night,  
 Below the starry clusters bright,  
 Some bearded meteor, trailing light,  
     Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed ;  
 On burnished hooves his war-horse trode ;  
 From underneath his helmet flowed,  
 His coal-black curls as on he rode,  
     As he rode down to Camelot.

Verse more vivid never yet was written. There is something in it of the style of Virgil. Virgil and Tennyson, in fact, have many points in common. Both were great virtuosos in the art of words. Both were great creators of

Jewels five words long  
 That on the stretched forefinger of all Time  
 Sparkle for ever.

Indeed, the splendid lines which Tennyson addressed to Virgil apply with almost equal aptness to himself :

Landscape-lover, lord of language  
     more than he that sang the Works and Days,  
*All the chosen coin of fancy*  
     *flashing out from many a golden phrase ;*

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,  
     tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd ;  
*All the charm of all the Muses*  
     *often flowering in a lonely word.*

When we come to read *Ænëid*, his first great poem in blank verse, the highly wrought Virgilian workmanship is still more evident. Here is

the picture of Aphrodite when her beauty wins the golden apple from the hands of Paris :

Idalian Aphrodite beautiful,  
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,  
With rosy slender fingers backward drew  
From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair  
Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat  
And shoulder ; from the violets her light foot  
Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form  
Between the shadows of the vine-bunches  
Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

The three great masters in our language of narrative blank verse are Milton, Keats, and Tennyson. The opening of the *Morte d'Arthur* is a roll of very noble sound :

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd  
Among the mountains by the winter sea ;  
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,  
Had fallen in Lyonesse about their Lord,  
King Arthur : then, because his wound was deep,  
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,  
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,  
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,  
A broken chancel with a broken cross,  
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.  
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one  
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

In the later *Idylls of the King*, the "art and finish" of which Ruskin wrote became again too evident ; and still more was this the case in *The Princess*. Yet the song "Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white," is of extreme beauty ; while "the small sweet idyll" was, in Tennyson's opinion, the finest piece of verse he ever wrote :

Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height :  
What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang)  
In height and cold, the splendour of the hills ?  
But cease to move so near the Heavens, and cease  
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted Pine,  
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire ;  
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,  
For Love is of the valley, come thou down  
And find him ; by the happy threshold, he,  
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,  
Or red with spirted purple of the vats,  
Or foxlike in the vine ; nor cares to walk  
With Death and Morning on the silver horns,



Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,  
 Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,  
 That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls  
 To roll the torrent out of dusky doors :  
 But follow ; let the torrent dance thee down  
 To find him in the valley ; let the wild  
 Lean-headed Eagles yelp alone, and leave  
 The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill  
 Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,  
 That like a broken purpose waste in air :  
 So waste not thou ; but come ; for all the vale  
 Await thee ; azure pillars of the hearth  
 Arise to thee ; the children call, and I  
 Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,  
 Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet ;  
 Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,  
 The moan of doves in immemorial clms,  
 And murmuring of innumerable bees.

That this is one of the most wrought and finished pieces of verse existing in our language can hardly be denied. Yet many a reader will prefer the opening of *The Lotus-Eaters* :

There is sweet music here that softer falls  
 Than petals from blown roses on the grass,  
 Or night-dews on still waters between walls  
 Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass ;  
 Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,  
 Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes ;  
 Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.

In considering Tennyson's wide diversities of style we must not overlook his lighter work, *The Talking Oak*, *The Day-dream*, *The Brook*, and others of the kind. In this last poem the extreme skill in using words is like the magic of a conjurer :

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,  
 I slide by hazel covers ;  
 I move the sweet forget-me-nots  
 That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,  
 Among my skimming swallows ;  
 I make the netted sunbeam dance  
 Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars  
 In brambly wildernesses ;  
 I linger by my shingly bars ;  
 I loiter round my cresses ;

## THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

And out again I curve and flow  
To join the brimming river,  
For men may come and men may go,  
But I go on for ever.

As the years went on the style of Tennyson tended to put off its richness and to become more simple without losing power. If we compare *Locksley Hall* with *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, we are conscious of this difference at once. Compare these lines from the first poem :

Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag,  
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the trailer from the crag ;

Droops the heavy-blossom'd bower, hangs the heavy-fruited tree—  
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres of sea,

with these from the later work :

In the hall there hangs a painting—Amy's arms about my neck—  
*Happy children in a sunbeam sitting on the ribs of wreck.*

Or again :

While I sheltered in this archway from a day of driving showers—  
Peeped the winsome face of Edith like a flower among the flowers.

Or, lastly, perhaps the finest line he ever wrote :

Cold upon the dead volcano sleeps the gleam of dying day.

In the same style of strong simplicity are his latest poems, that greatest of all hymns, *Crossing the Bar*, and the exquisitely beautiful lines *To Sleep* :

To sleep ! to sleep ! the long bright day is done  
And darkness rises from the fallen sun.  
To sleep ! To sleep !  
Whate'er thy joys, they vanish with the day,  
Whate'er thy griefs, in sleep they fade away.  
To sleep ! To sleep !  
Sleep, mournful heart, and let the past be past.  
Sleep, happy soul ! All life will sleep at last.  
To sleep ! To sleep !

Our mention of these poems brings us to another side of Tennyson which we have not yet considered—the side which appealed direct to the great public and which made him popular and rich. Such were the well-known lines :



Break, break, break,  
 On thy cold gray stones, O Sea !  
 And I would that my tongue could utter  
 The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,  
 That he shouts with his sister at play !  
 O well for the sailor lad  
 That he sings in his boat on the bay !

And the stately ships go on  
 To their haven under the hill ;  
 But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,  
 And the sound of a voice that is still !

Break, break, break,  
 At the foot of thy crags, O Sea !  
 But the tender grace of a day that is dead  
 Will never come back to me.

This, in its very beauty of simplicity, has gone straight into the hearts of millions.

Another poem of this kind is *Rizpah*. The description of the poor old woman, creeping to the gallows-foot at dead of night to feel if yet another bone had dropped from the chained skeleton which had been her son, is one to rend the very heartstrings. To the class of popular appeal belong *The May Queen*, *The Two Voices*, *Lady Clare*, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, *Dora*, and *The Miller's Daughter*. It is said that Queen Victoria was so delighted that the miller's daughter made her husband happy that she appointed Tennyson her next Poet Laureate.

*In Memoriam*, the great elegy on the death of Arthur Hallam, stands in a class apart. It contains the loveliest gems of poetry, but also much that helped to make the book a popular success among that vast majority of readers who not only have no taste for verse but who actively dislike it—thoughts on the living themes of life and love, of joys and hopes and sorrows, things that appeal to the soul and spirit of every child of man. It is with only half a smile that one recalls the fact that an enterprising publisher brought out a version of *In Memoriam* in prose ; which is, to the lover of poetry, as if a miner should store up the rubble of his washing-pan and throw the gold away. It is poetry, and poetry alone that keeps, and will keep, *In Memoriam* alive among the world's great works of art—the poetry that fills it with such life-blood that we cannot bring ourselves to think that it will ever die.

There is another side to Tennyson, which is but little known. Who

thinks of him as a satirist? Yet his lines on Bulwer are like a bunch of nettles. Bulwer had written *The New Timon* against Tennyson, a dull piece of satire, all venom and no sting. This was Tennyson's reply:

We know him out of Shakespeare's art  
And those fine curses which he spoke;  
Old Timon with his noble heart,  
Which, strongly loathing, greatly broke.

So died the Old; now comes the New.  
Regard him; a familiar face;  
I thought we knew him. What, it's you,  
The padded man, that wears the stays!

What profits now to understand  
The merits of a spotless shirt,  
A dapper boot, a little hand,  
If half the little soul is dirt?

A Timon, you? Nay, nay, for shame!  
It looks too arrogant a jest—  
The fierce old man—to take his name!  
You bandbox! Off, and let him rest!

And now, what are our last words concerning this great poet? We think it must be said that he holds the highest place among the followers of Keats. In graphic power he is equal with his master; in faculty of colour, not his equal, yet not much below him. He had, of course, what Keats had not, the power of appealing to the human heart to which we have referred. Such a poem as, for instance, *Rizpah*, is quite outside the range of Keats, or perhaps of any other poet. But, considered as an artist pure and simple, not only have his pictures no pretence to match the mighty scale of the *Hyperion*; they want also the deep poetic charm in which the finest work of Keats is "rich to intoxication." Tennyson's *Sleeping Beauty*, for example, is as vivid as a picture, as the sleeping Adonis of Keats; but the Princess sleeps beneath "a silk star-broidered coverlid," Adonis under a coverlid

Gold-tinted like the peach,  
Or ripe October's faded marigolds.

The difference in the painting of these two coverlids very fairly marks the difference between the gift of Tennyson and the gift of Keats; a difference not of drawing, nor of brilliance, but of glamour—of poetic charm.

Tennyson's workmanship, besides, even at its best, is seldom quite free from the marks of labour. He achieves only by great care and pains what lesser poets achieve by instinct and at once. Vividness of drawing,



variety of subject—these, we think, are the two points in which Tennyson is unexcelled. In range, indeed, he has no rival. He is the only poet who can depict, with equal ease, all things in nature, from the highest to the lowest. He can set before us Venus, as she stood on Ida, her light foot shining rosy-white among the violets, the glowing sunlights floating on her rounded form between the shadows of the vine-branches, her rosy, slender fingers drawing back,

From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair  
Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat  
And shoulder.

Or he can work out such a study as :

a pasty, costly-made,  
Where quail and pigeon, lark and leveret lay,  
Like fossils of the rock, with golden yolks  
Imbedded and injellied.

It is not every poet—certainly it is neither Wordsworth, Keats, nor Shelley—who can sit down to paint, with equal felicity, and seemingly with equal gusto, the goddess of love and a game-pie.

Such a study makes us marvel at the workmanship ; but such is not the kind on which we love to dwell. And Tennyson's best pictures ought not, in truth, to be compared with those of any other poet. Their excellence is not of the same kind. Yet what a gallery is his !—how many and how beautiful its scenes ! There is the lonely garden on which Mariana looked out from the windows of the moated grange, the flower-pots black with moss, the peaches falling from their rusty nails, the black sluice choked with waterweed, the solitary poplar shaking its melancholy leaves. There is the vale of Ida, the vine-roofed, crocus-paven bower, where Paris is giving the apple to Venus, and C  none is peeping from her cave behind the whispering pine. There are the arras of the Palace of Art, inwrought with scenes like life ; St. Cecilia sleeping near her organ ; Ganymede flying up to heaven among the eagle's feathers ; Europa, in her floating mantle, carried by the bull ; King Arthur lying wounded in Avilion, among the weeping queens. There is Sir Bedivere, flinging the sparkling sword into the enchanted lake ; and Vivien at the feet of Merlin ; and Elaine, like a white lily, on her black, slow-gliding barge. And there, too, is many such a piece of painting, as the gorgeous lines which call up before the eye the scene of Camelot, the rich dim city, on the day of the departure of the knights ; the pageant passing in the streets, the tottering roofs alive with gazers, the men and boys astride of the carved swans and griffins, crying God-speed at every corner, the grotesque dragons clinging to the

walls and bearing on their backs the long rich galleries, the lines of lovely ladies, gazing, weeping, showering down an endless rain of flowers.

All these things are things of beauty. Surely they will be a joy for ever.

Tennyson was born in 1809 at Somersby in Lincolnshire, at his father's rectory, and was sent to Cambridge, where he won the Chancellor's Medal for a prize poem on the unpoetical subject "Timbuctoo."

His first book of poems was entitled *By Two Brothers*, written in conjunction with his brother Charles. In 1830 he published *Poems, chiefly Lyrical*, and a further volume, *Poems*, in 1833. These were revised and collected with additions in the two volumes of 1842. *The Princess* appeared in 1847, and was followed by *In Memoriam* in 1850, in which year he became Poet Laureate at the death of Wordsworth. His subsequent volumes comprised *Maud and other Poems* (1855), *The Idylls of the King* (1858), *Enoch Arden* (1864), works which were followed by *Harold* (1876), *Becket* (1884), and other dramas. Tennyson was created a peer in 1884, and died October 6, 1892.

## § 2

## ROBERT BROWNING

Born (1812) in easier circumstances than Tennyson, or, let us say, in a more affluent home, Robert Browning had a far harder fight for fame, and this not only because he missed a circle of applausive friends to hail his advent, but yet more because his upbringing secluded him somewhat from youths of his own age and drove him inward upon his own private standards and that self-applause which is the worse side of self-reliance. His grandfather was a Robert Browning, clerk in the Bank of England; his father a Robert Browning, also clerk in the Bank of England. Robert the first liked his calling and prospered in it; Robert the second prospered in it fairly, but liked it not, having been driven to it under parental durance after throwing up a post in the West Indies through disgust of slave labour—resigning, too, some young artistic ambitions. Robert the third's education ran on lines not very dissimilar from Ruskin's, his great contemporary. His father intended him for the Bar, agreeing with the mother that a clerkship in the Bank was not good enough for their boy, whose formal education would seem to have been limited to a dame's school, a private academy at Peckham, and a short course in Greek at University College, London. When he decided to be a poet instead of a barrister, his parents did not obstinately oppose the choice. His father financed his first poems, without pecuniary recompense; and the good lad (we are told) read through the whole of Johnson's Dictionary as preparative for a literary life. *Pauline*



(dated October 22, 1830), an essay in the analytic-dramatic, a form that to the end attracted him, must be judged now as a marvellous production from the pen of a boy ; but, as we have said, English criticism had reached its worst and the critics would have none of this marvel—which D. G. Rossetti, alighting on it some years later in the Reading Room of the British Museum and not knowing its author, transcribed for himself out of pure enthusiasm. *Paracelsus*—a greater wonder, holding for some the germ of all that was eventually best in Browning (with the germ, too, of something even greater that he might have been), earned neither fame nor money, though it won him acquaintance with many distinguished men of letters—Landor, Wordsworth, Carlyle, Dickens, and with Macready, at whose invitation he wrote the tragedy of *Strafford*, performed at Covent Garden on May 1, 1837. It ran but a few nights. As if to seal his unpopularity *Sordello* followed, and few denied that to extract enjoyment, or even a continuity of meaning, from *Sordello* would try the patience of a saint. "I blame no one," said Browning of its failure, "least of all myself, who did my best then and since." Which assertion we may match, if we choose, against Ben Jonson's :

By God, 'tis good ; and, if you like it, you may.

But poets who talk in this fashion are sore and soured ; and they are usually both because they are egotistical, not because they are innovators ; because they demand overmuch of the reader's attention without being at the pains to attract him—forgetting him, in short, and thereby neglecting the first obligation of good manners. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, were innovators ; but at least they appealed to their public, and persuasively. Browning could not see that he had this obligation ; and a man, if he have strength enough—as he had—can no doubt do without it in the long run. But meantime he was sore and indignant, with an indignation which (for in private life he was more expansive than Tennyson, and given to wearing his heart on his sleeve), from time to time, even after fame had found him, he inevitably remembered :

British Public, ye who like me not  
(God love you !)—whom I yet have laboured for  
Perchance more careful whoso runs may read  
Than erst when all, it seemed, could read who ran.

But at this time (1837–1841), in spite of discouragement, he still thought of himself as destined to succeed in drama ("Robert Browning—you writer of plays"), and accumulated those dramas in his desk—*King Victor and King Charles*, *The Return of the Druses*, and that playlet of sheer poetry *Pippa Passes*. It was, indeed, by a lyrical conversion of his dramatic instinct,

or by a lyrical application of it—foreboded in *Pippa*—that at length he came to his own. It so happened that Moxon, the publisher, was issuing some cheap reprints of the old dramatists; and it came into Moxon's head that a number of Browning's poems might be set up in the same type and put on the market. Browning gladly agreed; and thus was started the truly epoch-making little series, *Bells and Pomegranates* (1841–1846). It began with *Pippa*. Some few years later, on a soil prepared by the Pre-Raphaelites, this charmingly original piece would of a certainty have been welcomed, as Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon* was welcomed. But in 1841 critics and public remained unmoved. *Sordello* still cast its shadow ahead, with that deadliest of frosts which can clog any writer—the chill of his readers' expectancy. But in No. 3, *Dramatic Lyrics*, and No. 7, *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, the true Browning found himself. He did not at once abandon his ambition of writing for the stage, and the series wound up, in 1846, with two plays, *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy*. These, like their predecessors, lacked "movement." But about the dramatic and the lyrical sense and their interfusion in *Dramatic Lyrics* there could be no question: and this interfusion made them unlike almost anything previously written in English verse. For to group these conveniently with his later efforts, in this genre of his discovery, *Dramatis Personæ* (1864), *Dramatic Idylls* (1879–1880), not only does he seize upon dramatic "situations," from the simplest to the uncanniest, with the skill and resource of a conjurer; he fits them to lyrical measures which, startling at first, and sometimes at first forbidding, come to be felt by us as inevitably right—each separate metre the only possible one for its own curious theme. Who but Browning, for example, could have found *A Grammarian's Funeral* for a subject; or, having found it, could have found the queer metre (with the queer rhymes)?

Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,  
     'Ware the beholders!  
 This is our master, famous, calm, and dead,  
     Borne on our shoulders. . . .  
 Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place.  
     Hail to your purlicus,  
 All ye highfliers of the feathered race,  
     Swallows and curlews!  
 Here's the top-peak! the multitude below  
     Live, for they can, there.  
 This man decided not to Live but Know—  
     Bury this man there?  
 Here—here's his place. . . .

Who but Browning could have found such themes, and fitted such haunting metres to them, as *The Laboratory*, *The Lost Mistress*, *Up at a*



*Villa, The Last Ride Together, A Toccata of Galluppi's, Love among the Ruins?*—

Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles  
 Miles and miles  
 On the solitary pastures where our sheep  
 Half-asleep  
 Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop  
 As they crop—

Was the site once of a city great and gay  
 (So they say)  
 Of our country's very capital, its prince  
 Ages since,  
 Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far  
 Peace or war.

Above all, who but Browning could have matched imagination with metre as he matched them in that brief model and masterpiece, *Saul*? It is seen, as David sees it; felt awfully, as David feels it:

And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered—and sparkles 'gan dart  
 From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with a start—  
 All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.

And it sings itself inspiredly as David must have sung it, through hard effort and rapture down to its close. Among the very few nineteenth-century poems which attain to being "of its sort," one perhaps, and one only, can sincerely challenge it—Victor Hugo's *Boöz Endormi*:

Tout reposait dans Ur et dans Jerimadeth ;

and to some of us even the vigil of Ruth in that exquisite piece must surrender to the home-running of David through the woods and wild brakes in the humid daybreak by murmuring witnessing waters.

There reached Browning, late in 1844, a volume of verse by a Miss Elizabeth Barrett, an invalid cousin of his friend, John Kenyon. He admired it, especially a piece entitled *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*, and expressed his admiration in a letter. An interview followed, for Miss Barrett, herself an experimenter in verse, had been seized upon in imagination by *Bells and Pomegranates*, and of that interview sprang a passionate, lifelong affection. The subsequent story was romantic enough, but very simple. A grim father forbade the match; the lovers eloped secretly and by stratagem, were married clandestinely on September 12, 1846, and a week later were on their way to Paris. From Paris they went on to Italy, and lived at Pisa and at Florence until 1851; and, with brief returns to

England and Paris, made Italy their home until Mrs. Browning's death in 1861. They wrote much; and each achieved a very long poem in blank verse. Mrs. Browning's *Aurora Leigh* in nine books was given to the world in 1856; her husband's prodigious *The Ring and the Book* made its appearance in four long instalments, 1868-1869. The pair of them had been innovators in rhyme, and just here it must be admitted that they went astray. Browning could rhyme with anything, and too often spoilt poetry by this confident trick; whereas Mrs. Browning too often spoilt poetry by a pedantic indifference in matching sounds. She is at her best in *Sonnets from the Portuguese* and *Casa Guidi Windows*, in both of which a passion is expressed—passionate love and a passion for Italian liberty. *Aurora Leigh*, one suspects, has few steady readers nowadays. But *The Ring and the Book*, with its turnings and returnings, its apparent garrulities and prolixities (all seen in review to be a part of Browning's determination to press the last drop of juice out of the chosen tragedy) must continue to be studied as one of the world's literary wonders. Browning's later work—*Balaustion's Adventure* (cruelly labelled by D. G. Rossetti *Exhaustion's Imposture*), *Prince Hohenstich-Schwangen* (1871), *Fifine at the Fair* (1872), *Red Cotton Nightcap Country* (1873), *The Inn Album* (1875), *Pacchiarotto* (1876), the *Agamemnon* translation (1877), *La Saisiaz* and *Two Poets of Croisic* (1878)—exhibits a genius in decline, or it may be that having been so long and unjustly dispraised for his merits, and having at length found a public which acclaimed him "Master" for his defects, he yielded to the temptation and, in place of poetry, poured out volume upon volume of "thinking cloud" in metrical form. It is curious to note that in their later years Tennyson, the popular idol, turned to be a haughty and mystic recluse, while Browning, the uncompromising, expands into a genial man of society and diner-out. It should be added that his greatness gave itself no airs; that he continued to write indefatigably; and that in his last years, when his fame had become national, he reasserted his pristine power now and again—especially in *Dramatic Idylls* (1879-1880), and *Asolando*, published in 1889 on the day of his death. Intervening volumes are *Jocoseria* (1883), *Ferishtah's Fancies* (1884), *Parleyings with Certain People* (1887). He was accorded a public funeral and lies near his great rival in the Abbey.

Browning's last lines (the Epilogue to *Asolando*, comparable with Tennyson's famous *Crossing the Bar* as a noble utterance closing a long and noble life) contain a not exorbitant apologia for:

One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,  
 Never doubted clouds would break,  
 Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,  
 Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
 Sleep to wake.



He was, before all things, a manly poet ; hopeful and helpful, with no languors of sentimentality ; and, as his wife said truly of *Pomegranates*, though the rind be hard the fruit is ripe and red to the core.

The following are passages from some of Browning's best-known, because comparatively simple, lyric and narrative poems :

#### THE YEAR'S AT THE SPRING (from PIPPA PASSES)

The year's at the spring,  
The day's at the morn ;  
Morning's at seven ;  
The hill-side's dew-pearled ;  
The lark's on the wing ;  
The snail's on the thorn ;  
God's in His heaven—  
All's right with the world !

#### HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD

Oh, to be in England  
Now that April's there,  
And whoever wakes in England  
Sees, some morning, unaware,  
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf  
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
In England—now !

#### EVELYN HOPE

Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead !  
Sit and watch by her side an hour.  
That is her book-shelf, this her bed ;  
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower.  
Beginning to die too, in the glass ;  
Little has yet been changed, I think :  
The shutters are shut, no light may pass  
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

Sixteen years old when she died !  
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name ;  
It was not her time to love ; beside,  
Her life had many a hope and aim,  
Duties enough and little cares,  
And now was quiet, now astir,  
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—  
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while,  
 My heart seemed full as it could hold !  
 There was place and to spare for the frank young smile,  
 And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.  
 So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep :  
 See, I shut it inside the sweet, cold hand !  
 There, that is our secret : go to sleep !  
 You will wake, and remember, and understand.

### SUMMUM BONUM

All the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of one bee :  
 All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the heart of one gem :  
 In the core of one pearl all the shade and the shine of the sea :  
 Breath and bloom, shade and shine,—wonder, wealth, and how far above them—  
 Truth, that's brighter than gem,  
 Trust, that's purer than pearl,—  
 Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe—all were for me  
 In the kiss of one girl.

### THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

Into the street the Piper stept,  
 Smiling first a little smile,  
 As if he knew what magic slept  
 In his quiet pipe the while ;  
 Then, like a musical adept,  
 To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,  
 And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,  
 Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled ;  
 And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,  
 You heard as if an army muttered ;  
 And the muttering grew to a grumbling ;  
 And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling  
 And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.  
 Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,  
 Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,  
 Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,  
 Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,  
 Cocking tails and prickling whiskers,  
 Families by tens and dozens,  
 Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—  
 Followed the Piper for their lives.  
 From street to street he piped advancing,  
 And step for step they followed dancing,  
 Until they came to the river Weser,  
 Wherein all plunged and perished !



—Save one, who, stout as Julius Cæsar,  
Swam across and lived to carry  
(As he, the manuscript he cherished)  
To Rat-land home his commentary.

## HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he ;  
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three ;  
“ Good speed ! ” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew ;  
“ Speed ! ” echoed the wall to us galloping through ;  
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,  
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

’Twas moonset at starting ; but while we drew near  
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;  
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ;  
At Duffeld, ’twas morning as plain as could be ;  
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,  
So, Joris broke silence with, “ Yet there is time ! ”

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris, “ Stay spur !  
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault’s not in her,  
We’ll remember at Aix ”—for one heard the quick wheeze  
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,  
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,  
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,  
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;  
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,  
’Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff ;  
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,  
And “ Gallop,” gasped Joris, “ for Aix is in sight ! ”

“ How they’ll greet us ! ”—and all in a moment his roan  
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone ;  
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight  
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,  
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,  
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets’ rim.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,  
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,  
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,  
Call my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer ;  
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,  
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is—friends flocking round  
 As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground ;  
 And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,  
 As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,  
 Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)  
 Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

## § 3

## ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

"Swinburne," said Tennyson, "is a reed through which all things blow into music." "He simply sweeps me away before him," said Ruskin, "as a torrent does a pebble." These sayings perfectly express the double gift of Swinburne—the strange new tunes of his rhythms and the torrent-sweep of his verse.

The verse was unique and the man was unique. He was born in 1837, his father being Admiral Swinburne, and his mother a daughter of Lord Ashburnham—neither of them persons at all peculiar or bizarre. But the boy was simply an astounding freak. Imagine a Lilliputian body, with very sloping shoulders, a neck as slender as a lily-stalk, a giant's head, with a crest of orange-fiery hair "like some strange bird of Paradise," eyes and lips for ever twitching in a kind of spasm, a tiny body that, at the least excitement, shivered like a leaf in tempest, and a voice that shrilled upward like a piccolo. At Eton and Oxford, where he picked up Greek and Latin as if by intuition, he began to compose verses. As he himself said afterwards :

Some sang to me dreaming in class-time,  
 And truant in hand as in tongue,  
 For the youngest are born of boy's pastime,  
 The eldest are young.

But it was not till 1861 that he put forth his first volume, two little dramas, *The Queen Mother* and *Rosamond*, respecting which there is an anecdote that throws a strange and striking light upon the singularities of his character. He was staying with William Stubbs, afterwards Bishop of Oxford, and upon the invitation of his host and hostess he read aloud a play, probably *Rosamond*.

Stubbs, Edmund Gosse tells us, "was very much impressed with the merits of the piece, but . . . felt obliged to say that he thought the tone of the amatory passages somewhat objectionable." The result was "a long silent stare, followed by a scream which rent the vicarage, and by the bolt upstairs of the outraged



poet, hugging his MS. to his bosom. Presently gentle Mrs. Stubbs stole upstairs, and, tapping at Swinburne's door, entreated him to come down to supper. There was no reply, but an extraordinary noise within of tearing, and a strange glare through the keyhole. All night, at intervals, there were noises in the poet's room, and the Stubbses were distracted. In the morning Swinburne appeared extremely late, and deathly pale. Stubbs, by this time very wretched, hastened to say how sorry he was that he had so hastily condemned the drama, and how much he hoped that Swinburne had not been discouraged by his criticism. The poet replied, 'I lighted a fire in the empty grate, and I burned every page of my manuscript.' Stubbs was horrified. 'But it does not matter; I sat up all night and wrote it through again from memory.' "

Such was the strange wild being from whom there was to come a strange wild poetry, that yet was charged with the intensest beauty.

In 1865 appeared a play on the Greek model, *Atalanta in Calydon*, a perfect masterpiece of splendid verse. It tells the story of the hunting of the wild boar which Diana sent to Calydon to prey upon the herds. The maiden-huntress, Atalanta, was the first to wound it, and it was slain at last by the young hero Meleager, who gave the hide and tusks to Atalanta, with whom he was in love, to the jealousy of all the other hunters. They strove to wrest them from her, but the hero fought and beat them, though in the end it cost his life.

The first chorus was alone enough to show that a new poet had arisen :

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,  
The mother of months in meadow or plain  
Fills the shadows and windy places  
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain ;  
And the brown bright nightingale amorous  
Is half assuaged for Itylus,  
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,  
The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,  
Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,  
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes  
From leaf to flower and flower to fruit ;  
And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire  
And the oat is heard above the lyre,  
And the hooped heel of a satyr crushes  
The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

In 1866 appeared *Poems and Ballads*, a book which, if he had written nothing else, would have set and kept his fame upon the highest peaks of glory. It was received with a scream of hysterics on the grounds of immorality. As Swinburne himself puts it, "the water began to scethe

and rage in the British tea-kettle." The publisher withdrew the book from circulation and it was reissued by another. The hubbub was absurd, even for those days, and is almost unintelligible in ours, when elderly ladies are wont to write textbooks of erotics for the edification of young girls.

One of the poems sought out for opprobrium was *Dolores*. Dolores is not one woman in particular, but the embodying of all the women in the world who use their beauty to entice their lovers to their doom—vampire-women, siren-women, who pick white the bones of men. So the moral—if one must wring a moral out of a work of art—seems to be that all such sirens and their dupes come alike to a bad end.

Cold eyelids that hide like a jewel  
 Hard eyes that grow soft for an hour ;  
 The heavy white limbs, and the cruel  
 Red mouth like a venomous flower ;  
 When these are gone by with their glories,  
 What shall rest of thee then, what remain,  
 O mystic and sombre Dolores,  
 Our Lady of Pain ?

*The Triumph of Time*, a poem based upon a real experience of his own, may be called the greatest love-lament existing. Never was a wail so sweet and piercing, so full of the ache and yearning for a woman loved in vain. Never rang in the ears of men such a splendour of despair :

I shall never be friends again with roses ;  
 I shall loathe sweet tunes, where a note grown strong  
 Relents and recoils, and climbs and closes,  
 As a wave of the sea turned back by song.  
 There are sounds where the soul's delight takes fire  
 Face to face with its own desire ;  
 A delight that rebels, a desire that reposes ;  
 I shall hate sweet music my whole life long.

The pulse of war and passion of wonder,  
 The heavens that murmur, the sounds that shine,  
 The stars that sing and the loves that thunder,  
 The music burning at heart like wine,  
 An armed archangel whose hands raise up  
 All senses mixed in the spirit's cup  
 Till flesh and spirit are molten in sunder—  
 These things are over, and no more mine.

It is interesting to know that the man who wrote these stanzas, with their celestial music, possessed no ear whatever for the melody of sound.

It has been said of Swinburne that he was too fond of playing with the



loud pedal down. But no man could awake soft-pedalled melodies more sweet and stilled. Such, for example, are these stanzas from *The Garden of Proserpine* :

Here, where the world is quiet ;  
 Here, where all trouble seems  
 Dead winds' and spent waves' riot  
 In doubtful dreams of dreams ;  
 I watch the green field growing  
 For reaping folk and sowing,  
 For harvest-time and mowing,  
 A sleepy world of dreams.

No growth of moor or coppice  
 No heather-flower or vine,  
 But bloomless buds of poppies,  
 Green grapes of Proserpine,  
 Pale beds of blowing rushes  
 Where no leaf blooms or blushes  
 Save this whereout she crushes  
 For dead men deadly wine.

From too much love of living,  
 From hope and fear set free,  
 We thank with brief thanksgiving  
 Whatever gods may be :  
 That no life lives for ever ;  
 That dead men rise up never ;  
 That even the weariest river  
 Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,  
 Nor any change of light :  
 Nor sound of waters shaken,  
 Nor any sound or sight :  
 Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,  
 Nor days nor things diurnal ;  
 Only the sleep eternal  
 In an eternal night.

*Poems and Ballads* was dedicated to Burne-Jones, the painter—and the dedication is a piece of verse which perhaps excels in beauty any other poem in the volume. In the lines that follow he is speaking of his songs :

Is there shelter while life in them lingers,  
 Is there hearing for songs that recede,  
 Tunes touched from a harp with man's fingers  
 Or blown with boy's mouth in a reed ?

## THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

Is there place in the land of your labour,  
Is there room in your world of delight,  
Where change has not sorrow for neighbour  
And day has not night ?

In a land of clear colours and stories,  
In a region of shadowless hours,  
Where earth has a garment of glories  
And a murmur of musical flowers ;  
In woods where the spring half uncovers  
The flush of her amorous face,  
By the waters that listen for lovers,  
For these is there place ?

Though the world of your hands be more gracious  
And lovelier in lordship of things  
Clothed round by sweet art with the spacious  
Warm heaven of her imminent wings,  
Let them enter, unfledged and nigh fainting,  
For the love of old loves and lost times ;  
And receive in your palace of painting  
This revel of rhymes.

Swinburne also wrote a kind of gay love-lyric which is a new thing in the world of art—such as *A Match*. It is a song that might have been sung by Ariel :

If love were what the rose is,  
And I were like the leaf,  
Our lives would grow together  
In sad or singing weather,  
Blown fields or flowerful closes,  
Green pleasure or grey grief ;  
If love were what the rose is,  
And I were like the leaf.

If I were what the words are,  
And love were like the tune,  
With double sound and single  
Delight our lips would mingle,  
With kisses glad as birds are  
That get sweet rain at noon ;  
If I were what the words are,  
And love were like the tune.

If you were April's lady,  
And I were lord in May,  
We'd throw with leaves for hours  
And draw for days with flowers,



Till day like night were shady  
 And night were bright like day ;  
 If you were April's lady,  
 And I were lord in May.

If you were queen of pleasure,  
 And I were king of pain,  
 We'd hunt down love together,  
 Pluck out his flying-feather,  
 And teach his feet a measure,  
 And find his mouth a rein ;  
 If you were queen of pleasure,  
 And I were king of pain.

*Love at Sea* is an example of the same kind of work, but it is also of great interest for the skill with which it wins the very spirit of a poem by Théophile Gautier, and gives it a new body of beauty in English verse :

We are in love's land to-day ;  
 Where shall we go ?  
 Love, shall we start or stay,  
 Or sail or row ?  
 There's many a wind and way,  
 And never a May but May ;  
 We are in love's hand to-day ;  
 Where shall we go ?

Our landwind is the breath  
 Of sorrows kissed to death  
 And joys that were ;  
 Our ballast is a rose ;  
 Our way lies where God knows  
 And love knows where.  
 We are in love's hand to-day—

Where shall we land you, sweet ?  
 On fields of strange men's feet,  
 Or fields near home ?  
 Or where the fire-flowers blow,  
 Or where the flowers of snow  
 Or flowers of foam ?  
 We are in love's hand to-day—

Land me, she says, where love  
 Shows but one shaft, one dove,  
 One heart, one hand.  
 —A shore like that, my dear,  
 Lies where no man will steer,  
 No maiden land.

His next great book was *Songs Before Sunrise* (1871). These poems are almost all loud-pedal music—but such music! Let us take two stanzas from the *Prelude*:

Play then and sing ; we too have played,  
We likewise, in that subtle shade.  
We too have twisted through our hair  
Such tendrils as the wild Loves wear,  
And heard what mirth the Mænads made,  
Till the wind blew our garlands bare  
And left their roses disarrayed,  
And smote the summer with strange air,  
And disengirdled and discrowned  
The limbs and locks that vine-wreaths bound.  
We too have tracked by star-proof trees  
The tempest of the Thyiades  
Scare the loud night on hills that hid  
The blood-feasts of the Bassarid,  
Heard their song's iron cadences  
Fright the wolf hungering from the kid,  
Outroar the lion-throated seas,  
Outchide the north-wind if it chid,  
And hush the torrent-tongued ravines  
With thunders of their tambourines.

Here, again, are two stanzas from the tremendous *Marching Song*—the song of the leaders in the march of the progress of mankind:

We mix from many lands,  
We march for very far ;  
In hearts and lips and hands  
Our staffs and weapons are ;  
The light we walk in darkens sun and moon and star.  
It doth not flame and wane  
With years and spheres that roll,  
Storm cannot shake nor stain  
The strength that makes it whole,  
The fire that moulds and moves it of the sovereign soul.

But there is soft-pedal music in it, too—such as *Siena*, one of the loveliest things that he or any other poet ever wrote. We have only space to give the opening, but the whole poem should be read—absorbed. Its possession is, as it were, to hang a splendid picture in the gallery of the mind or to fill the soul with the remembrance of a glorious symphony:

Inside this northern summer's fold  
The fields are full of naked gold,  
Broadcast from heaven on lands it loves ;  
The green veiled air is full of doves ;



Soft leaves that sift the sunbeams let  
 Light on the small warm grasses wet  
 Fall in short broken kisses sweet,  
 And break again like waves that beat  
 Round the sun's feet.

The second series of *Poems and Ballads* appeared in 1878. The number of great poems is fewer than in the earlier volume, nor does any single poem rise quite to the same level, except *The Forsaken Garden*, the supreme elegy on the death of Baudelaire, and the *Ballad of Dreamland*. The last, which is exquisitely beautiful, we will quote in full :

I hid my heart in a nest of roses,  
 Out of the sun's way, hidden apart ;  
 In a softer bed than the soft white snow's is,  
 Under the roses I hid my heart.  
 Why would it sleep not ? why should it start,  
 When never a leaf of the rose-tree stirred ?  
 What made sleep flutter his wings and part ?  
 Only the song of a secret bird.

Lie still, I said, for the wind's wing closes,  
 And mild leaves muffle the keen sun's dart ;  
 Lie still, for the wind on the warm sea dozes,  
 And the wind is unquieter yet than thou art.  
 Does a thought in thee still as a thorn's wound smart ?  
 Does the fang still fret thee of hope deferred ?  
 What bids the lids of thy sleep dispart ?  
 Only the song of a secret bird.

The green land's name that a charm encloses,  
 It never was writ in the traveller's chart,  
 And sweet on its trees as the fruit that grows is,  
 It never was sold in the merchant's mart.  
 The swallows of dreams through its dim fields dart,  
 And sleep's are the tunes in its tree-tops heard ;  
 No hound's note wakens the wildwood hart.  
 Only the song of a secret bird.

In the world of dreams I have chosen my part,  
 To sleep for a season and hear no word  
 Of true love's truth or of light love's art,  
 Only the song of a secret bird.

After this date he put forth a long, long series of poetic works, some of which, like *Songs of the Springtides* (1880) and *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882), as well as his long dramas, contain, by bursts and gleams, much splendid verse. But on these we shall not dwell. Little by little, there steals into the reader's mind a sense of something failing. The rush and flow of words

is always there ; it is the old spell that is dying. Like the beauty of Tennyson's "Maud," the beauty of the verse becomes more and more "splendidly null." The keenest lovers of his music, who rank him, with Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, and Shelley, among the supreme masters of the poetry of England, seldom or never read these later works at all. *These* are not the things that make the very hearts within us "ache with the pulse of his remembered song." He affects us like a great piano-player who has lost his touch. He strikes the keys with all his early vigour, but the charm is there no longer. The music lacks the magic and the thrill.

Swinburne, at his best and greatest, produced two kinds of poems, quite unlike each other, and both unexcelled. In the first, the frenzied rush of rhythm, in the phrase of Ruskin, sweeps the soul away before it, as in *Mater Triumphalis* and the *Hymn to Man*. In the second kind, the music, lulled and mesmerising as a charmer's tune, bears the spirit to a land enchanted, a land of strange unearthly blossoms, the wonder-world of all the fair phantasmal women who are the daughters of sweet dreams. There are the things of vision which, in *Before the Mirror*, the white girl watches in her magic glass :

There glowing ghosts of flowers  
 Draw down, draw nigh ;  
 And wings of swift spent hours  
 Take flight and fly ;  
 She sees by formless gleams,  
 She hears across cold streams,  
 Dead mouths of many dreams that sing and sigh.

Face fallen and white throat lifted,  
 With sleepless eye  
 She sees old loves that drifted,  
 She knew not why,  
 Old loves and faded fears  
 Float down a stream that hears  
 The flowing of all men's tears beneath the sky.

The following are the chief volumes of Swinburne's poems (but the reader will find most of his finest work in *Selections from A. C. Swinburne*, edited by Edmund Gosse and Thomas James Wise (Heinemann)) : *The Queen Mother and Rosamond* (1861), *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865), *Poems and Ballads* (1866), *Songs Before Sunrise* (1871), *Bothwell* (1874), *Songs of Two Nations* (1876), *Erechtheus* (1876), *Poems and Ballads* (second series) (1878), *Songs of the Springtides* (1880), *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882), *Lochrine* (1887).



During the last thirty years of his life Swinburne lived with his friend Theodore Watts-Dunton at The Pines, Putney, where he died in 1909. He was buried at Bonchurch, in the Isle of Wight.

## § 4

## GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

The virtual discovery of the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins in 1918 when Robert Bridges first edited and published his strange and magnificent religious poetry, and the amazing modernity of his language, makes us forget that he was a Victorian and lived from 1844 to 1889. His poems were the result of deep mystical experience as well as the scholarship of an original mind. He was an Anglican who eventually became a Jesuit priest, and who came to regard even his spiritual poetry as a vanity so that he never published it. Most of his poems were sent in letters to Robert Bridges. When they were printed more than thirty years after their author's death they were wildly acclaimed by the poets of the time, many of whom were themselves experimenting in sounds and verse forms, and courting obscurity. Hopkins's obscurity arises largely from a tremendous compression of language. He leaves out words grammatically essential, piles image upon image, uses daring rhymes and rhythms, depends much upon alliteration, inverts his sentences, and startlingly uses words in new contexts which give them new meanings. All this made him in the 1920's and 1930's the darling of the newer schools of poetry to whom obscurity and difficult reading were almost a virtue instead of a vice. Hopkins's own poetry is redeemed by the fierce sincerity of his thought and its spiritual consecration. If one has patience and power to follow his rush of images, supply the missing words of the grammatical structure, and listen to the splendid music of his sounds, Gerard Manley Hopkins takes a place as a poet of importance in English literature. The quotation of one of his most well known and often quoted (though not one of his most difficult) poems, *Pied Beauty*, will convey his quality :

Glory be to God for dappled things—  
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow ;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim ;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls ; finches' wings ;  
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow and plough ;  
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.  
  
All things counter, original, spare, strange ;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how ?)  
With swift, slow ; sweet, sour ; adazzle, dim ;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change :  
Praise Him.

More typical is the opening of his poem, *The Windhover*, with its lifting lines :

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-  
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple dawn-drawn falcon, in his riding  
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding  
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing  
In his ecstasy.

Written at a time when the language of poetry was getting stale with over-use (a fault for which Swinburne must be blamed), Gerard Manley Hopkins brought fresh life to it.

## § 5

## DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI AND CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Rossetti was born in 1828 in Charlotte Street, London, his father, himself a poet, being Professor of Italian at King's College. The future poet-painter was, by birth, one-quarter English and the rest Italian—a combination easy to be traced alike in his appearance and in his cast of character—in his warm dark complexion, with large grey-bluish eyes, in his look of fiery will and purpose, in his sudden-changing whims of temper, now gay with laughter like a boy's, now stirred to stormy anger, yet capable of passion strong as death—a very child of Southern blood, the blood that runs like flame.

Even as a boy he was a poet and a painter. At fifteen he was a student at the Royal Academy schools. But academic art was a thing abhorrent to him. Indeed, he never mastered the strict rules of drawing or perspective. His passion and his gift were all for colour. So great was his precocity that before he reached the age of twenty-one he had set up in a studio of his own, had painted pictures which, like the "Girlhood of the Virgin," were, of their kind, without a rival, and had written poems, like *The Blessed Damozel* and *My Sister's Sleep*, which were to hold their place among his best. At the same early age he had founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, whose aim it was to paint pictures in minutest detail, as in nature. Among the Brothers were Millais, Holman Hunt, Woolner, and Deverell. It happened that the last-named painter, going with his mother into a milliner's in Oxford Street, saw among a number of young girls at work, one with a glorious mass of reddish hair—the favourite colour of the Brotherhood. Deverell, through his mother, asked the girl if she would sit to him. She consented to become his model, and afterwards Rossetti's also. Her name was Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal, and she became Rossetti's wife. Every reader has seen her lovely face look out upon him from her husband's paintings—as Mariana in the moated grange ; as St. Cecilia at the organ ; as one of the weeping queens whose black barge came across the enchanted



lake to bear away the dying King ; above all as *Beata Beatrix*, the picture which he himself described—"while the bird, a messenger of Death, drops the poppy between her hands, she, through her shut lids, is conscious of a new world."

Two years after the marriage, his wife died. Standing beside her coffin with the manuscript of his first book of poems in his hands, he declared that it was for her they had been written, and that they should be buried with her. And they went with her to the grave.

Rossetti now took a house at Chelsea, where, with brief intervals, his after life was passed. The house was, like its owner, strange, romantic, and bizarre—crammed with old mirrors, lutes, mandolins, and citherns, bronze and ivory idols, lacquered screens of birds and blossoms, blue jars with peacocks' feathers, coins, daggers, dragons, crystals, fans. The daylight, even at the height of summer, was shut out by heavy velvet curtains. Strange creatures had their dwelling in the garden—a pair of armadillos, a kangaroo that one day murdered its own mother, a deer that kept itself from boredom by stamping out the feathers of the peacock's tail, a raccoon that "looked like the devil" when it snarled, and which once escaped into the house and chewed a pile of manuscript to rags.

Some years after his wife's death Rossetti was persuaded that the poems buried with her ought not to be allowed to perish. In truth, he was easily persuaded, for he never ceased to regret that he had given his consent. The coffin was disinterred, the manuscript was recovered, and in 1870 the poems were given to the world.

The book was received with acclamation. Ruskin and Swinburne were enthusiastic. Among the poems most admired were *The Blessed Damozel*, *My Sister's Sleep*, *The Burden of Nineveh*, *Love's Nocturn*, and *Sister Helen*.

*The Blessed Damozel*, perhaps the best-known of his works, both from the poem and from the painting which he made upon it, tells how

The blessed damozel leaned out  
From the gold bar of Heaven ;  
Her eyes were deeper than the depth  
Of waters stilled at even ;  
She had three lilies in her hand,  
And the stars in her hair were seven.

It lies in Heaven, across the flood  
Of ether, as a bridge.  
Beneath, the tides of day and night  
With flame and darkness ridge  
The void, as low as where this earth  
Spins like a fretful midge.

## THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw  
Time like a pulse shake fierce  
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove  
Within the gulf to pierce  
Its path ; and now she spoke as when  
The stars sang in their spheres.

She is waiting for her lover, still alive on earth, and aching for the hour  
when he will join her.

He shall fear, haply, and be dumb ;  
Then will I lay my cheek  
To his, and tell about our love,  
Not once abashed or weak :  
And the dear Mother will approve  
My pride, and let me speak.

Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,  
To Him round whom all souls  
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads  
Bowed with their aureoles :  
And angels meeting us shall sing  
To their citherns and citoles.

. . . . .  
She gazed and listened and then said,  
Less sad of speech than mild,—  
“ All this is when he comes,” She ceased.  
The light thrilled towards her, filled  
With angels in strong level flight.  
Her eyes prayed, and she smiled.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path  
Was vague in distant spheres ;  
And then she cast her arms along  
The golden barriers,  
And laid her face between her hands,  
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

*The Burden of Nineveh* is perhaps his finest poem. It made its first appearance anonymously, in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* in 1865. where Ruskin read it with extreme delight, and wrote to ask Rossetti, of all people in the world, if he knew who was the author ! The opening explains itself :

In our Museum galleries  
To-day I lingered o'er the prize  
Dead Greece vouchsafes to living eyes,—  
Her Art for ever in fresh wise  
From hour to hour rejoicing me.



Sighing I turned at last to win  
 Once more the London dirt and din ;  
 And as I made the swing-door spin  
 And issued, they were hoisting in  
     A wingèd beast from Nineveh.

A human face the creature wore,  
 And hoofs behind and hoofs before,  
 And flanks with dark runes fretted o'er,  
 'Twas bull, 'twas mitred Minotaur,  
     A dead disbowelled mystery :  
 The mummy of a buried faith  
 Stark from the charnel without scathe,  
 Its wings stood for the light to bathe,—  
 Such fossil cerements as might swathe  
     The very corpse of Nineveh.

His mind goes back to the ancient city of Sardanapalus, in the days before it smouldered into sand—when Sennacherib may have knelt within the idol's shadow—when Queen Semiramis may have brought it gifts of zones of gold and precious spices ; and at last there comes to him the striking thought that the time may be

When some may question which was first,  
 Of London or of Nineveh.

For as that Bull-god once did stand  
 And watched the burial-clouds of sand,  
 Till these at last without a hand  
 Rose o'er his eyes, another land,  
     And blinded him with destiny :—  
 So may he stand again ; till now,  
 In ships of unknown sail and prow,  
 Some tribe of the Australian plough  
 Bear him afar,—a relic now  
     Of London, not of Nineveh !

Or it may chance indeed that when  
 Man's age is hoary among men,—  
 His centuries threescore and ten,—  
 His furthest childhood shall seem then  
     More clear than later times may be :  
 Who, finding in this desert place  
 This form, shall hold us for some race  
 That walked not in Christ's lowly ways,  
 But bowed its pride and vowed its praise  
     Unto the God of Nineveh.

## THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

The smile rose first,—anon drew nigh  
The thought : . . . Those heavy wings spread high,  
So sure of flight, which do not fly ;  
That set gaze never on the sky ;  
Those scripted flanks it cannot see ;  
Its crown, a brow-contracting load ;  
Its planted feet which trust the sod : . . .  
(So grew the image as I trod) :  
O Nineveh, was this thy God,—  
Thine also, mighty Nineveh ?

In 1880 appeared a second volume, *Ballads and Sonnets*, of which the chief work is *The House of Life*, a hundred and one sonnets on the theme of love. That many of these are among the finest in the language is beyond dispute, but often they are overwrought and so obscure that Rossetti himself proposed to write an explanation of them—which he never did—and his brother William published a translation of them into prose. This is a defect, undoubtedly. Who requires a prose translation of the sonnets of Keats or Wordsworth? But many are as clear as dewdrops, and “beautiful exceedingly.” Here is a part of the fourth sonnet, *Lovesight* :

O love, my love ! if I no more should see  
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,  
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring,—  
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope  
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,  
The wind of Death's imperishable wing ?

And here is the whole of *Body's Beauty*, which is a description of his own painting, “Lady Lilith” :

Of Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told  
(The witch he loved before the gift of Eve)  
That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could deceive,  
And her enchanted hair was the first gold.  
And still she sits, young while the earth is old,  
And, subtly of herself contemplative,  
Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave,  
Till heart and body and life are in its hold.

The rose and poppy are her flowers ; for where  
Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent  
And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare ?  
Lo ! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went  
Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent  
And round his heart one strangling golden hair.



The picture of Lady Lilith is, like all his paintings, a glowing mass of colour. He was, in poetry, a disciple of Keats, the greatest colourist in literature. Most curious, therefore, is it to observe that his verse has hardly any colour in it anywhere !

Rossetti wrote some charming songs, which have been often set to music. One of the sweetest is *A New-Year's Burden* :

Along the grass sweet airs are blown  
 Our way this day in Spring.  
 Of all the songs that we have known  
 Now which one shall we sing ?  
     Not that, my love, ah no !—  
     Not this, my love ? why, so !—  
 Yet both were ours, but hours will come and go.

The branches cross above our eyes,  
 The skies are in a net :  
 And what's the thing beneath the skies  
 We two would most forget ?  
     Not birth, my love, no, no,—  
     Not death, my love, no, no,—  
 The love once ours, but ours long hours ago.

We must not leave Rossetti's work without glancing at his ballads, which contain some of his very finest work, but which cannot easily be quoted. *The King's Tragedy* tells the story of Catherine Douglas thrusting her arm into the staple of the door to keep out the assassins of King James. *Sister Helen* relates how a forsaken girl melts a wax figure of her false lover so that he wastes away and dies. *Rose Mary*, the longest, and on the whole the finest, describes how another girl sees within a magic crystal an ambush waiting for her knight. She warns him not to take that road, but she is unaware that the crystal can only be read rightly by a stainless virgin, and she herself has tripped a little in the ways of love. Her young knight takes another road, rides straight into the ambush, and is slain.

In the year following the publication of *Ballads and Sonnets* Rossetti's health, which had long been failing, owing in part to the free use of chloral, broke down entirely. He died at Birchington on April 9, 1882, and was buried in the little churchyard by the sea.

Was Rossetti greater as a painter, or, as he himself considered, as a poet ? There are some who find it hard to say. Yet that charmed book of verses, that volume of a thousand visions, called up, as by a wizard's music, from "the shores of old romance !"—for ourselves, we should

be slow to change it even for that gorgeous gallery of dreamy women with faces of unearthly beauty, gazing from bowers of blossom, reading strange lore in magic crystals, touching their lutes to unknown melodies, or drawing long combs of silver through their locks of golden flame.

Christina Rossetti, the younger sister of the painter-poet, was born two years after him, in 1830. She passed a quiet and secluded life—she was for many years devoted to her mother—and she never married, for, although two suitors sought her hand, one of them was a Roman Catholic and the other a free-thinker, so that, being a woman of intense religious views, she sent them both away. Poetry was with her a kind of mother-tongue. Almost literally it might be said of her that she lisped in numbers. "Writing poetry," said Victor Hugo, "is either easy or else impossible." "If poetry," said Keats, "comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all." The maxim is by no means one of universal truth—her brother's poems, for example, like those of Horace and of Wordsworth, came to him only with agony and tears of blood—but it is the simple truth about Christina's. With far more verity than Tennyson she might have written :

I do but sing because I must,  
And pipe but as the linnets sing.

And her songs are simple, dulcet, and translucent beyond those of almost all the singers of her time.

In 1862 appeared her first volume, *Goblin Market and other Poems*, and three years later *The Prince's Progress*, both with illustrations by Rossetti. The poems which give their titles to these volumes are two ballads. *Goblin Market* tells the story of two girls who meet a band of goblin folk beside a forest stream, and buy, at the price of a golden lock of hair, a heap of magic fruits ; one of the girls eats of them—the other dares not—and, later, wastes and wanes away ; her sister, though in terror, ventures again to meet the goblin men, and wins from them an antidote which brings the dying girl to life. *The Prince's Progress* tells how a prince sets out, alone, to meet his bride, who has long been pining for him in her lonely palace—how his progress is delayed ; first by a milkmaid who is a kind of witch ; next by an old man in a cavern who is boiling an elixir, who compels the prince to blow his bellows, and who at last falls dead beside the cauldron ; and then by a mountain-flood which nearly drowns him—so that when at length he comes in sight of the palace of his bride, he meets her funeral coming from the gates. Weary of waiting, she has pined to death. There are some who take this poem as a kind of allegory of life. It is a work of exquisite poetic beauty, and that is enough for us.



These poems, which are her longest, are not well fitted for quotation—they must be read throughout. But almost any of her songs will serve to show her gift in its perfection. Here is one—and for our purpose one is as good as many :

When I am dead, my dearest,  
Sing no sad songs for me ;  
Plant thou no roses at my head,  
Nor shady cypress tree :  
Be the green grass above me  
With showers and dewdrops wet :  
And if thou wilt, remember,  
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,  
I shall not feel the rain ;  
I shall not hear the nightingale  
Sing on, as if in pain :  
And dreaming through the twilight  
That doth not rise nor set,  
Haply I may remember,  
And haply may forget.

## § 6

## EDWARD FITZGERALD

Edward Fitzgerald was born in 1809, the son of a country squire, who left him ample means to live according to his liking. He chose to pass his days in rustic solitude, far from the madding crowd, a kind of dreamy hermit, a vegetarian who, in the phrase of his friend Tennyson, "lived on milk and meal and grass." He wrote a multitude of books, but all are half forgotten, with the exception of that single poem which has made his name immortal. He was forty-four when he began to render into English the *Rubá'iyát* of Omar Khayyam, the poet-astronomer of Persia—like himself a loungeur in the flowery ways of life. For years on end he worked upon it, and finally submitted it to the editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, who kept it for a year and then returned it to the author. He had it printed in 1859 at his own expense, but, as it had no sale whatever, he bestowed the copies as a gift on Bernard Quaritch, the bookseller, who first reduced the price from five shillings to half a crown, then to a shilling,

and finally to a penny in the box outside his shop. By a rare stroke of fortune Rossetti bought a copy, and, bursting with enthusiasm, sent all his friends to buy it. Swinburne became the owner of four copies. And so the book began to sell. It is a curious thought that but for Rossetti's lucky dip, one of the gems of English poetry might have become lost for ever. Is there such another volume among the penny-boxes of to-day?

The qualities that have made the little work so famous, apart from the supreme beauty of the verse, are, first, its ever-popular philosophy of life, which is simply that of Herrick's song, "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may"; and secondly, the glow and colour of its oriental scenes, from the hour when morning strikes the sultan's palace with a shaft of light to the glamour and magic of the wizard twilight, when a low large moon is hanging over perfumed gardens, where the guests, with wine-cup and rosy garlands, sit "star-scattered" on the grass.

Tennyson considered this to be the best translation ever made, alike in music, form, and colour. Here are some of the stanzas in which, like all lovers of great poetry, he especially delighted:

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring  
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling :  
The Bird of Time has but a little way  
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,  
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—  
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow !

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep  
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep :  
And Bahram, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass  
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.

Yet ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose !  
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close !  
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,  
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows !

Would but some wingèd Angel ere too late  
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,  
And make the stern Recorder otherwise  
Enregister, or quite obliterate !

Ah Love ! could you and I with Him conspire  
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,  
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then  
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire !



Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—  
 How oft hereafter will she wax and wane :  
 How oft hereafter rising look for us  
 Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain !

And when like her, oh Sáki, you shall pass  
 Among the Guests star-scattered on the grass,  
 And in your joyous errand reach the spot  
 Where I made *One*—turn down an empty glass !

As a translator of six dramas by Calderon, of Æschylus's *Agamemnon*, and of the two *Œdipus* plays of Sophocles, he was no less brilliantly successful. His own original poems had appeared as early as 1849.

## § 7

## MATTHEW ARNOLD

Matthew Arnold (1822–1888), who lies buried at Laleham, his birthplace, beside his beloved Thames, was a poet who never won, nor indeed sought, popularity ; and, likely enough, never will be. But upon many minds of his time and men of the kind that, in his own opinion, counted for most, his muse laid a spell that, passed on to another generation, is now never likely to be broken. In comparison with Tennyson and Browning he wrote little. In middle life he turned to become a prose-writer, and his prose challenges Newman's for lucidity, thought, and charm—there can be no higher praise. The fount of poetry never flows superabundantly in him, and in later years (as he quite honestly confessed) its channel dried. But the spring-water, while it lasted, ran limpidly, and if not

Gaily as the sparkling Thames,

yet with an occasional rare effervescence, now of youth and anon of medicinal salt.

Educated, after a brief trial of Winchester, at Rugby, under his father—the famous Dr. Thomas Arnold—he proceeded to Balliol College, Oxford, in 1841. At Rugby he had written a prize poem in *Alaric at Rome*, and he repeated this success by winning the Newdigate Prize with a poem on *Cromwell* ; missed his First Class at Oxford somewhat unaccountably, but atoned for this with an Oriel Fellowship—at that time the most justly envied of University honours. He remained at Oxford, however, but a short while ; after an interval of schoolmastering he became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, the President of the Council for Education, and was

by him appointed, in 1851, an inspector of schools—a post in which for thirty-five years he conscientiously laboured with an intelligence which, at the time too seldom recognised, has been the late parent of many reforms and will come to be claimed for ancestor by many more. He died at the age of sixty-five of heart-failure, suddenly : a man (as the saying is) younger than his years, of fine presence, distinguished manners ; cheerful in company ; a little stiff, but in no wise ostentatious ; above all, a good friend.

In the course of this somewhat uneventful life Arnold came under two compelling influences, both of which he repaid with piety ; and (apart from his official tasks) left two indelible marks on his time. For the first influence—in school and Oxford days young Matthew customarily spent a great part of his vacations at Fox How near Grasmere, a house which his father had taken to refresh himself after the monotonous country around Rugby : and here, among the fells and streams of the Lake Country, he grew up under the thoughtful spell of Wordsworth, whose best interpreter he lived to become ; to see Nature with Wordsworth's eyes and listen to her voices with Wordsworth's ear.

For the second, Matthew Arnold was, as has been hinted, by nature a true friend ; and at Oxford he had found one, Arthur Hugh Clough, a fellow-Rugbeian, and by two or three years his senior, whom he adored and lived to immortalise.

To this friendship with Clough Arnold dedicated his two famous elegies, *The Scholar-Gipsy* and, more ceremonially, *Thyrsis*. In the first he chants against

This strange disease of modern life  
With its sick hurry, its divided aims ;

but in the second his friend is lifted with the shepherd Daphnis, to look down into this unquiet world from the sill of the immortal gates.

On the whole, *Thyrsis* is the height of his descriptive achievement. The lines to the cuckoo, which are a fair specimen, are of a beauty not excelled by anything by Tennyson, nor indeed of any other poet, except Keats :

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,  
When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,  
Before the roses and the longest day—  
When garden-walks, and all the grassy floor,  
With blossoms, red and white, of fallen May,  
And chestnut-flowers are strewn—  
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,  
From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees,  
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze :  
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I !



Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go ?  
 Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,  
 Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,  
 Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,  
 Sweet-William with its homely cottage-smell,  
 And stocks in fragrant blow ;  
 Roses that down the alleys shine afar,  
 And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,  
 And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,  
 And the full moon, and the white evening-star.

Arnold was wayward, perhaps a little affectedly, in issuing, revoking, and revising his work. In 1849 he put forth a thin volume, *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems by A.* ; which was followed in 1852 by *Empedocles on Etna, and other Poems, by A.* In 1853 he combined these two volumes and put his full name on the title-page, omitting (ill-advisedly) *Empedocles* with a few minor pieces and adding some wonderful things—*Sohrab and Rustum*, *The Church of Brou*, *Requiescat*, *The Scholar-Gipsy*. In 1855 appeared *Poems by Matthew Arnold, Second Series*, and in 1858 *Merope*.

But in the interval he had been elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford. At the expiration of his term of office, in 1862, he was re-elected for another five years ; and in 1865 appeared the first series of his *Essays in Criticism*, a sufficient pedestal for anyone lower than an actual poet, and an actual poet of a very high order. That Arnold a hundred years hence will occupy the height by right, is disputed by some, and there—since none of us will be there to check our prophecies—the question may be left. But in the meanwhile it is true to say, with the late Herbert Paul (*Matthew Arnold, English Men of Letters Series*) : “ Arnold did not merely criticise books himself. He taught others how to criticise them. He laid down principles, if he did not always keep the principles he laid down. Nobody, after reading *Essays in Criticism*, has any excuse for not being a critic.” Matthew Arnold’s was a wistful wisdom, between doubt and faith, which came home, as it does still, to many perplexed but not despairing spirits. He was the poet, indeed, of the profounder hesitations and inmost misgivings of his age. Witness the stern yet beautiful melancholy of his *Dover Beach*, in which the soft dirge of the waves makes him reflect :

The Sea of Faith  
 Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore  
 Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl’d ;  
 But now I only hear  
 Its melancholy long withdrawing roar,  
 Retreating to the breath  
 Of the night-wind down the vast edges drear  
 And naked shingles of the world.

## THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another ! for the world which seems  
To lie behind us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain ;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night !

Or, again, hear him, in *Self-dependence*, compare man's restless heart and broken aims with the calm, unwavering ministry of the stars, and of the sea in its tidal fidelity to the universal order :

Unaffrighted by the silence round them,  
Undistracted by the sights they see,  
These demand not that the things without them  
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

And with joy the stars perform their shining,  
And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll ;  
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting  
All the fever of some differing soul.

Bounded by themselves, and unregardful  
In what state God's other works may be,  
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,  
There attain the mighty life you see.

O air-born voice ! long since, severely clear,  
A cry like thine in my own heart I hear :  
" Resolve to be thyself ; and know that he  
Who finds himself, loses his misery."

It is the message of Marcus Aurelius in other tones and times : " Look within." And, indeed, Arnold's words about the sad, striving emperor-philosopher can be applied without alteration to himself : " And so he remains the especial friend and comforter of all clear-headed and scrupulous, yet pure-hearted and upward-striving men, in those ages more especially, that walk by sight, not by faith, but yet have no open vision. He cannot give such souls, perhaps, all they yearn for, but he gives them much ; and what he gives them, they can receive."



## § 8

WILLIAM MORRIS, ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH, COVENTRY PATMORE

While Rossetti was painting, and teaching Burne-Jones to paint, under an influence derivative from Ruskin (a most helpful friend to these young enthusiasts), there came to him a young man, fresh from Oxford, who at once fell under the charm. This was William Morris (1834-1896), recently articled to George Edmund Street, designer of the London Law Courts and one of the martyrs of the Gothic Revival in which Ruskin headed many to martyrdom. Morris had taken to architecture simply because he loved it, and characteristically he "appointed" himself rather than be an "art student." But already beneath his boyish enthusiasm there ran two fibres of conviction: the first that the arts could only be saved by going back to mediæval thoroughness and learning a workman's use of material and its handling; the second that all arts met together in the pursuit of beauty: and upon these, as time went on, there grew and increased a passionate conviction that the essential art, even of all politics as well as of all poetry, painting, sculpture, weaving, the designing of textiles, tissues, ceramics, glassware, was a craft with one single legitimate object—to make human life happier and diffuse joy "in widest commonalty spread." Few men ever can have been more modestly unconcerned with their own genius. Coming under Rossetti's influence, he adored and was content to paint and learn. His companions of the Rossetti circle called him "Topsy"—probably because, like the negro-child in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, he made no claim that Nature travailed at his birth, but simply "'spected he growed." When he and his "master" Rossetti went down to Oxford on their gay adventures of painting a series of frescoes for the Oxford Union Society, Morris was writing poetry as a child might. Towards the end of a day's work Rossetti, resting on a sofa, would say, "Topsy, read us one of your grinds," and Morris, fidgeting, would blurt through something like this:

Gold on her head, and gold on her feet,  
And gold where the hems of her kirtle meet,  
And a golden girdle round my sweet;—  
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Or these lines from the Introduction to *The Earthly Paradise*:

Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,  
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,  
Or make quick-coming death a little thing,  
Or bring again the pleasure of past years,

Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,  
Or hope again for aught that I can say,  
The idle singer of an empty day.

Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,  
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?  
Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme  
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,  
Telling a tale not too importunate  
To those who in the sleepy region stay,  
Lulled by the singer of an empty day.

So with this Earthly Paradise it is,  
If ye will read aright, and pardon me,  
Who strive to build a shadowy isle of bliss  
Midmost the beating of the steely sea,  
Where tossed about all hearts of men must be;  
Whose ravening monsters mighty men shall slay,  
Not the poor singer of an empty day.

Verses such as these, and the songs in *Love is Enough*, prove that he could "an' he would" have been eminent as a lyricist in an age of lyricists. But, having found his power in poetry, Morris (who was always a great man of his hands) did not shrink from great themes and mediæval length, even from mediæval monotony—always decorated along its length by tapestried delicacies after the manner of the gilt cowslips patterned at the feet of goddesses in an early Italian painting. *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867), *The Earthly Paradise* (1868–1870), his story of *Sigurd the Volsung* (1877), and his translations of the *Æneid* (1876) and of the *Odyssey* (1887) are all strong sustained efforts "at long breath" and suggest a Chaucer of later times, harking back for a forward wind and strongly recovering it. In all that he did there was something of a grand, godlike boy in Morris: and he stands out, straight and large, among the Pre-Raphaelites as a man innocent of crankiness or self-advertisement; truly, utterly self-sacrificing and innocently great.

Arthur Hugh Clough (1819–1861) has already been named as Arnold's most intimate friend at Rugby and Oxford. Like Arnold, he gradually gave up the orthodoxy in which he had been bred. His latest biographer, Mr. James Insley Osborne, has aptly described him as a specialist in intellectual honesty. He strove, as few young men strove, for self-knowledge and self-control, and for the vision and habit of duty. In one of his early poems he cries:

Come back again, my olden heart!  
I said, Behold I perish quite,  
Unless to give me strength to start  
I make myself my rule of right.





W. F. Mansell

"THE LADY OF SHALOTT," BY JOHN WILLIAM WATERHOUSE

Tate Gallery, London

This picture perfectly conveys the mystery surrounding the curse-stricken Lady of Shalott



"THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN," BY JAMES ELDER CHRISTIE  
National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh





*Copyright*

"ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE," BY G. F. WATTS, R.A.

National Portrait Gallery

The last of the Victorian poets.



*W. F. Mansell*

"LADY LILITH," BY DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

This picture, though dated 1864, was not completed until 1866 or 1867. In the year 1873 the artist, after one of his illnesses, entirely re-drew the face from a different model, with results which were not entirely satisfactory. The picture is described in Rossetti's poem "Lilith."





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### THE POOL OF TEARS

One of the most famous of Tenniel's illustrations to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*.



*Reproduced by permission of Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton Ltd.*

A SCENE FROM THACKERAY'S *VANITY FAIR*

After the illustration in colour by Lewis Baumer

Becky Sharp and Rawdon Crawley skirmishing at Miss Crawley's.





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"CHARLOTTE BRONTË," BY GEORGE RICHMOND, R.A.

National Portrait Gallery



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*W. F. Manvell*

"HETTY SORREL," BY THE HON. JOHN COLLIER

Blackburn Art Gallery



The poem by which, more than any other, Clough lives to-day, is his "Say Not the Struggle Nought Availeth" :

Say not the struggle nought availeth,  
The labour and the wounds are vain,  
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,  
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars  
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,  
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,  
And but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,  
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,  
Where daylight comes, comes in the light ;  
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,  
But westward look, the land is bright.

Coventry Patmore (1823-1896) may perhaps be described as a poet with an audience all his own. Only once, and that early, did he appeal to a wide public with his *Angel in the House*, an idyll of married love and domestic peace which, though marred by some elements of naïveté and sugariness, contains many beautiful lines and passages, such as :

Alone, alone with sky and sea  
And her, the third simplicity.

And again :

His only Love and she is wed !  
His fondness comes about the heart  
As milk comes when the babe is dead.

Once more :

The leaves, all stirring, mimick'd well  
A neighbouring rush of rivers cold,  
And, as the sun or shadows fell,  
So these were green and those were gold ;  
In dim recesses hyacinths droop'd,  
And breadths of primrose lit the air,  
Which, wandering through the woodland stoop'd  
And gather'd perfumes here and there ;  
Upon the spray the squirrel swung,  
And careless songsters, six or seven,  
Sang lofty songs the leaves among  
Fit for their only listener, Heaven.

Of all his writings Patmore set most value on his little book of meditations and apophthegms, *Rod, Root, and Flower* (1895), in which he attempted to gather his quintessential experience of life and his deepest beliefs as a Roman Catholic student of man and of his relations to time and eternity. One of his thoughts was this: "Science is a line, art a superficies, and life, or the knowledge of God, a solid."

The late Victorian anarchy seems interesting and tolerable, until one considers the dreadful waste of it in solitariness, in suicidal depression or suicidal relief from depression such as killed James Thomson (1834-1882), author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, many captivating lyrics, and that most awful of short poems, *In the Room*. A sense of unspeakable loneliness descends on the spirit as we consider Thomson's actual fate and compare it with what might have happened with but a little encouragement from his fellow-poets. But

The Gods are happy.  
They turn on all sides  
Their shining eyes,  
And see below them  
The earth and men.

## READING LIST

TENNYSON: Tennyson's *Works* with Notes by the author, edited with a Memoir, by Hallam, Lord Tennyson (Macmillan).

Tennyson's *Poems*, 2 vols., in Dent's Everyman's Library.

Sir Alfred Lyall's *Tennyson*, in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan), and Harold Nicolson's *Tennyson: Aspects of His Life, Character, and Poetry* (Constable), a notable defence of the poet.

W. H. Auden's recent volume of *Selections of Tennyson* has an introduction so over-critical that it has been violently criticised by Tennyson lovers (Faber).

THE BROWNING: *The Works of Robert Browning*, edited and annotated by the Right Hon. Augustine Birrell and Sir Frederic G. Kenyon (John Murray).

*Selections from the Poetical Works of Robert Browning* (John Murray).

Browning's *Poems* (2 vols.), *The Ring and the Book* (1 vol.), in Dent's Everyman's Library.

*The Poetical Works of Mrs. E. B. Browning*, complete in 1 vol. (John Murray).

*Poems of E. B. Browning: a Selection*, in the World's Classics (Oxford University Press).



G. K. Chesterton's *Browning*, in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

Ernest Rhys's *Browning and his Poetry*, in the Poetry and Literary Series (Harrap).

Kathleen E. Royds's *Mrs. Browning and her Poetry*, in the Poetry and Life Series (Harrap).

Oliver Elton's *The Brownings* (Arnold).

Edward Dowden has a good biography in Everyman's Library (Dent); and Osbert Burdett's *The Brownings* deals fully with the relationship of the two poets, and their letters.

SWINBURNE: *The Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, 6 vols. (Heinemann).

*The Tragedies of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, 5 vols. (Heinemann).

Also the Golden Pine Edition, 6 vols. (Heinemann).

*Swinburne. Selected Poems*, with Introduction by L. Binyon, in the World's Classics.

*The Letters of A. C. Swinburne*, edited and with an introduction by Edmund Gosse and T. J. Wise, 2 vols. (Heinemann).

*Swinburne*, by Harold Nicolson (Macmillan).

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS: *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, edited by W. H. Gardner (Oxford University Press, 1948).

*Gerard Manley Hopkins*. A selection of his poems and prose (Penguin Poets).

*Poems*, edited by R. Bridges, with introduction by Charles Williams; *Letters*; and a *Life*—all three are published by the Oxford University Press. Also *Note Books and Papers*, edited by Humphrey House, and a critical work by W. A. M. Peters.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI: *Poems and Translations*, in the Oxford Standard Authors (Oxford University Press). Also in Everyman's Library (Dent).

*Poems* (Nelson).

*The Early Italian Poets*, in the Original Metres, together with a Prose Translation of Dante's *Vita Nuova* (Routledge).

A. C. Benson's *Rossetti*, in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

*Thanks before Going*: Notes on Rossetti's Poems by John Masefield.

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI: *Complete Poetical Works* (Macmillan).

*Poems, 1840-1869*, in the World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

EDWARD FITZGERALD: *The Rubá'iyát of Omar Khayyám*, with six of Calderon's plays: Everyman's Library.

MATTHEW ARNOLD: *Complete Poetical Works* (Macmillan; Oxford University Press).

*Poems*, in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

*Essays in Criticism*, First and Second Series (Macmillan).

*Essays in Literature*, in Everyman's Library (Dent).

*Literature and Dogma, Culture and Anarchy, Friendship's Garland* (Murray).

Herbert Paul's *Matthew Arnold*, in English Men of Letters (Dent).

Clifford Dymont's *Introductions and Selection* (Phoenix).

Oliver Elton's *Tennyson and Matthew Arnold* (Arnold).

*Matthew Arnold*, by E. K. Chambers (Oxford University Press).

WILLIAM MORRIS: Messrs. Longmans publish his *Collected Works* in 24 vols., edited by Miss May Morris.

*The Earthly Paradise*. Messrs. Longmans publish various editions of this, including a cheap edition in 1 vol.

*Poems of William Morris: The Defence of Guenevere*, 1858; *Life and Death of Jason*, 1867; and *Other Poems*, 1856-1870, in the World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

Alfred Noyes's *William Morris*, in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan); A. C. Brock's *William Morris* in The Home University Library.

*The Letters of Morris*, edited by Philip Henderson (Longmans).

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH: *Poems*, with Introduction by Charles Whibley (Macmillan).

*Prose Remains*, edited by his Wife (Macmillan).

*Poetical Works*, edited by F. T. Palgrave (Routledge).

COVENTRY PATMORE: *Poems*, new and complete edition, with an Introduction by Basil Champneys (Bell).

The entire period is covered by *The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*, edited by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (Oxford University Press); the lighter verse is well represented in *The Oxford Book of Light Verse*, edited by W. H. Auden (Oxford University Press). The literary history: *The Age of Tennyson*, by Hugh Walker (Bell); and *A Survey of English Literature: 1830-1880*, by Oliver Elton (Arnold)—a masterly survey.

Other general works are:

*English Poetry in the later Nineteenth Century*, by B. Ifor Evans (Methuen).

*Ten Victorian Poets*, by F. L. Lucas (Cambridge University Press).

William Gaunt has written two fascinating books, *The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy* and *The Aesthetic Adventure* dealing with many of the poets.



## XXX

## DICKENS AND THACKERAY

## § I

VICTORIAN fiction is an historical fact, and is a thing sufficiently solid to justify a separate study. Of course every study really requires an introduction, and that introduction requires another introduction, leading back to the creation of the world. Nobody could explain the nature of Victorian England without going back at least to Roman Britain. Nobody could explain the nature of the novel without beginning at latest with the Greek and mediæval romances, or latest, but certainly not least, with that true origin of the humour and humanity of English fiction, the genius of Geoffrey Chaucer. Nor would anyone, of course, take the very term "Victorian" too literally, or the period of the long reign as anything but a coincidence that is also a convenience. Nobody would call an old Jacobin a Victorian because he died just after Victoria succeeded, nobody would call a young Bolshevist a Victorian because he was born just before Victoria died. But there was a norm or nucleus to which the later nineteenth century does really correspond. Victorianism is something that can be separated from its historical surroundings ; and all the more because it more or less separated itself. It was a very English garden ; it was a very large garden ; but it had a very high hedge.

The nearest we can get to naming this quality is something like this. The Victorian mind had gained certain liberties within certain limits ; but the point of it was that it believed that those limits as well as those liberties were eternal. Indeed, it was a mark of Victorianism that even its accidents looked eternal. There are a number of institutions which still exist ; but because they have been Victorian we feel vaguely that they must always exist. Probably they will do nothing of the kind, for they are only individual experiments like any shop or private school. But the point is that their names still sound like something more solid. If *The Times* were really to come suddenly to an end, we should all feel as if a cosmic clock had stopped. If we really heard that *Punch* was dead it would seem the passing of a whole order, like the Pagan lamentation that Pan was dead. It is difficult to imagine Bradshaw's Railway Guide belonging to anybody but Bradshaw ; or to believe that Bradshaw is not

an abstraction like Britannia. Even Mr. Mudie has about him a mysterious savour of immortality.

We shall discover, it is to be feared, that all this is an illusion. But we shall not discover the trick of producing that illusion. None of our huge modern monopolies and experiments of millionaires have the slightest suggestion of such permanence. Now the Victorians contrived to give this air even to those of their conventions that really were arbitrary or even absurd. They made a compromise, which did not seem to be a mere stopgap, between their limitations and their liberties. The case for it was that the liberties really were sufficiently large for the comfortable classes at least to feel comfortable. Yet the controls were there ; but it was a mark of the time that the controls were disguised as conventions, and even accepted as unconscious conventions. Like its typical product, the public schoolboy, the individual was encouraged to be a man of the world, but hardly of the real world ; certainly not of the whole world. I say the comfortable classes and the public schoolboy, because this marks the real if unconscious vice of Victorian England. It was not really taking thought for the whole people, as were in a way its chief continental rivals ; though France did it by the way of liberty and Germany by the way of slavery. But the typical Victorian gentry really were happy ; that is, they felt free enough to be comfortable and orderly enough to be safe. For a whole generation, for instance, men were content to identify Free Trade with freedom. At the beginning of the nineteenth century industrialism was an experiment ; by the end of the nineteenth century it was a problem. But for a time between it was really an atmosphere, if a smoky atmosphere ; its omnibuses and lamp-posts were a landscape that seemed permanent like the fields. In everything it had this power of treating its own compromise as common sense, and anything more logical as something lawless. It was equally disgusted with the clericalism and the anti-clericalism of the Continent. It was horrified alike by the strictness of the Russian censor and the licence of the Russian realists ; it remained to the last equally shocked by blasphemy and bored by theology.

One concrete expression of this spirit was the creation of a certain kind of novel. It was called for convenience in Victorian times the three-volume novel ; and it was called in derision in post-Victorian times the pleasant novel, the harmless novel, the quite nice novel, the novel with a happy ending. But nobody thus negatively condemning it appreciates the point of the Victorian compromise, unless he realises that the novel was for all, and that for many it was a liberation as well as a limit. Its unique character appears most in the matter of the difficult problem of decorum. In this Victorian age England was insular in time as well as space ; it was an island in the ages. It submitted to an expurgation that was new in England as



well as in Europe. But the point to seize is, that though it had something of the character of an interlude it had nothing of the restlessness of an interregnum. There might be more licence before and more licence after, but this age regarded itself as an age of liberty. George Moore was regarded as advanced because he was as candid as Henry Fielding, while Henry Fielding was still regarded as antiquated because he was as realistic as George Moore. But in the interlude people not only felt comfortable, they felt free. And in one sense there was a greater average of freedom. Nobody read what was open to the Frenchman, but everybody read what was forbidden to the French girl. Fiction was not, as on the Continent, caught into the controversies of religion and revolution. Continental fiction came to us indirectly, through a sort of filter or veil; a Frenchman might have said that the sun in its strength could only turn our fog into a vague glow. The sun, which at the beginning of the nineteenth century was at its glorious noon, was the greatness of Balzac. It is typical of the whole time that he seems to have influenced English novelists but not English novel-readers. Dickens has something of Balzac in the variety and vast number of his characters; Thackeray in the ugly picturesqueness of his shabby-genteel stories; his fine shades of shady people. In the latter case there probably is an influence; and it is curious to read between the lines of Thackeray's *Paris Sketch Book*; to note the Victorian in Paris who has come to patronise and remains to praise. In the latter case there is hardly more than a coincidence; the vitality and variety of Dickens were his own; and in so far as he inherited a tradition, it was the old gross and grotesque and essentially English tradition of Smollett or of Sterne. But by the time of Dickens the old coarse and comic novel had fallen from the hands of these great men; it had not only fallen low but fallen flat. And for several reasons Dickens comes naturally as the first figure in the procession.

## § 2

## CHARLES DICKENS

Charles Dickens was born at Portsmouth in 1812. At the time of his birth his father, the original Mr. Micawber, a man constantly in debt and difficulty, for whom nothing ever "turned up," was a dockyard clerk. The novelist's mother was the original of Mrs. Nickleby. The family removed to London when Dickens was quite a small boy. Their fortunes varied from comparative prosperity to direst poverty. Dickens has described these early days in the first part of *David Copperfield*. As a young man he



learned shorthand and became a parliamentary reporter. His first book, *The Sketches by Boz*, was published in 1836. In the same year he began to write *Pickwick*, which was a huge success and made Dickens famous when he was twenty-four. The rest of his life was spent in ceaseless and amazing creation. *Pickwick* was followed by *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *Barnaby Rudge*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and *A Christmas Carol*. In 1846 he became the first editor of the *Daily News*. Two years later he finished *Dombey and Son*, and this was followed by *David Copperfield*, *Little Dorrit*, *The Tale of Two Cities*, *The Uncommercial Traveller*, *Great Expectations*, *Our Mutual Friend* and *Edwin Drood*, which was unfinished at the time of his death in 1870.

Dickens twice visited America, frequently travelled on the Continent, and wore out his strength with readings from his novels. No other novelist was ever so popular in his own country, and in his own time.

Dickens was not a Victorian ; he was a giant who stood rather in the relation of the legendary father or founder of a city. His best work had already begun before the accession of the queen ; but, what is much more important, that work was the legacy of an older, in some ways larger and certainly looser tradition. The comic novel that he continued had come into existence before the nineteenth century had even discovered its problems, let alone the solutions of its problems. It belonged to an older and simpler world of pure creation. It was by comparison more like that prehistoric world which did really so far justify the legend of a golden age, that people could make up fairy-tales without knowing it. The gigantic and creative quality of Dickens is in a sense outside the Victorian era, and even outside the nineteenth century. He did indeed become so far controversially concerned about the problems and maladies of the nineteenth century as to make himself a morality that would have flamed into fury against the priggish prohibitions of the twentieth century. He did indeed adopt a humanitarian view of life, which was humane as well as humanitarian, and human as well as humane. But his creative power was what made him powerful ; and his impulse to use it came from the coarse and comic literature of the eighteenth century. But it marks the pressure of Victorian principles on him, that with him it was comic but no longer coarse.

At that moment, as a matter of fact, it was not even very comic. The truth is that Dickens started with stale and vulgar types, and by his own poetic fancy made the stale things startling and the vulgar things artistic. We talk of the imitation of great models ; but good literature is sometimes based on bad literature, and great men sometimes model themselves on small ones. It is a great gap in all literary history that the bad literature of the past is forgotten. But if we could only wander in that wilderness of



waste-paper, we should probably find a great many *Pickwick Papers* without *Pickwick*. There was then a vast amount of broad farce of the type of Jack Bragg or Verdant Green; the point is that Dickens could write the same broad farce so that it was also fine comedy. Take any one out of a hundred illustrations from *Pickwick* alone. Dickens was only there to illustrate his own illustrator. But no sooner were the stock characters settled for him than he began to unsettle them. They began to take on shapes more fantastic than those of mere farce; and men were almost astonished to find that something which was professedly comic was also profoundly funny. The element which entered here is indescribable; but the description of it would be a description of Dickens. It can only be suggested, not by description, but by example. Mr. Dowler in *Pickwick* is in his original outline a very conventional comic figure. Numberless novels and plays have presented the swollen figure of the bully, swaggering across the stage only to end in some collapse of cowardice. We are all familiar with the fire-eating major in a three-act farce, who damns and swears with the monotony of a machine-gun. Dowler is quite as noisy; but it is not in his noise that we hear the unique note which is Dickens's. It is a sort of sudden and unexpected moderation, an air of abrupt composure and lucidity, a hush before the storm which raises the whole horrible absurdity high into a sort of seventh heaven of humour. Consider the artistic quality of this paragraph, in which Mr. Dowler first refers to his wife.

"You shall," replied Dowler, "she shall know you. She shall esteem you. I courted her under singular circumstances. I won her through a rash vow. Thus. I saw her; I loved her; I proposed; she refused me.—'You love another?'—'Spare my blushes.'—'I know him?'—'You do.'—'Very good, if he remains here I'll skin him!'"

"Lord bless me!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick involuntarily. "Did you skin the gentleman, sir?" enquired Mr. Winkle with a very pale face.

"I wrote him a note. I said it was a painful thing. And so it was."

"Certainly," interposed Mr. Winkle.

"I said I had pledged my word as a gentleman to skin him. My character was at stake. I had no alternative. As an officer in His Majesty's Service, I was bound to do it. I regretted the necessity, but it must be done. He was open to conviction. He saw that the rules of the service were imperative. He fled. I married her. Here's the coach. That's her head."

Nobody will get anywhere near the inspiration of that passage by classifying Dowler with a lot of low-comedy characters. It is entirely by a new breath of genius that the stuffed figure of the stage bully begins to move; begins, still more unexpectedly, to stand still; to pause, ponder, to question himself about the gravity and delicacy of the task of skinning



another gentleman, under the compulsion of etiquette and good form. It is that sudden sobriety of Dowler that marks the imaginative inspiration or intoxication of Dickens. Dowler may be an invention as insanely impossible as his scheme for skinning a rival in Bath ; but he is not a mechanical invention. He is not a machine-gun like the major who explodes with oaths like shots, at the same recurrent intervals. He is an imaginative creation, and has his own life, if it be the life of griffins and goblins ; a life with its own variations, pauses, changes of tone, and halts of hesitation or distraction.

But as in Dowler, so in every one of the Dickens types there is originality in the detail even when there is comparative dullness in the design. There may be any number of shabby swindlers in fiction ; but there is only one who said, after unsuccessful attempts to borrow five shillings and half a crown, "Why, then we come to the ridiculously small sum of eighteen-pence." There may be any number of burlesques of blighted love in literature and journalism, but there was only one man who said, "I never loved a dear gazelle to charm me with its soft brown eye, but when it came to know me well, and loved me, it was sure to go and marry a market-gardener." There may be any number of small henpecked husbands in conventional comic writing ; but only one ever had to listen to his wife's description of a tall admirer in early days, ending with her father's deep-voiced prophecy "This will end in a little man." Common-place comedy is full of drunkards ; but there never was but one drunkard inspired by heaven to ask Mrs. Todgers for her ideal of a wooden leg ; it is full of jealous husbands, but there was but one voice that could greet a guest at breakfast by saying "Serpent !" in the deep and hollow tones of Mr. Pott ; it is full of foolish and extravagant dandies, but only one of them ever brought a horse with head, legs, and tail, all of the demdest beauty. It is in the management and treatment of these traditional jokes that Dickens shows his originality ; it is in the little touches that his genius is really gigantic. We sometimes expect them to be old types, but we always find that they are new ones. It is exactly these fine shades in Dickens which are generally missed by the fastidious, who profess to despise Dickens and to devote themselves to fine shades. He is really more subtle than such critics expect him to be ; for he brings such subtleties out of very crude simplicities. Anybody can make fun of tragic characters or tragic conditions ; generally speaking, one cannot make fun of anything else. But Dickens did achieve a stranger triumph in the traditional art of his time. He made comic characters comic.

The transition from the traditional to the individual humour is of course more characteristic of his earlier than his later work ; for his later work is unmistakably individual. By the time he had finished *Pickwick* it was



already impossible that so creative an artist should ever again fill up any design but his own. And, indeed, the design of his next novel, *Oliver Twist*, was in every possible way the contrary to the design of *Pickwick*. But it is in that vein of horror which ran parallel in him to the vein of humour ; and which is perhaps the next best and brightest of his particular talents. Even here, however, Bumble is something more than the beadle whom anyone could see outside the church-door, and the Artful Dodger is something more than the guttersnipe whom everybody sees in the gutter. The *Old Curiosity Shop* is brightened by the presence of Mr. Swiveller, whose poetical allusions are of an inspired appropriateness and inappropriateness ; a very Glorious Apollo. But Mr. Chuckster is almost as good as Mr. Swiveller, though Mr. Chuckster only appears once or twice for two or three minutes in the whole course of the book. And this brings us to that quality of procreative fertility and multiplicity which is already noted in *Pickwick*, and which marks all these earlier books if possible more unmistakably than the later ones. The miracle of Dickens is that all the men who are the machinery of the story are men and not machines. We may not be able to believe in them, but we are forced to imagine them ; and above all we are forbidden to forget them. In the same sense in which we know Sam Weller we know the surly groom who appears for a moment offering (for the sum of half a crown) to knock off the head of Sam Weller ; in the same way in which we know Mr. Skimpole we know the hard-headed person called Coavinses who calls once to arrest Mr. Skimpole ; in the same sense in which Mr. Perker is credible, Mr. Perker's clerk is credible. Perhaps the right word is not credible ; but rather incredibly real.

One way of testing this quality in Dickens is to read any good novel, and notice how much of it is necessarily left colourless where Dickens would have put in the colour of character, if we call it only the colour of caricature. We think it quite natural that some young man of fashion like Pendennis should pay off a cab and go about his own affairs ; but in Dickens we should very probably have had one brief beautiful glimpse of the cabman and his affairs. We think it reasonable that some aristocrat like Sir Willoughby Patterne should have a valet or a gamekeeper ; but in Dickens he would very likely have had a living valet and an everlasting gamekeeper. We might have made the acquaintance, or even the friendship, of the man who blacked the boots of Archdeacon Grantley or the man who cut the hair of Daniel Deronda. I do not suggest that these other great works have not their own equally unique and unapproachable merits ; I only say that this merit of Dickens is unique and unapproachable. But there is another way of testing the truth which is yet more convenient in illustrating the contrast. A hostile critic might say that in Dickens each person is not a personality but rather a pose. But it has often happened



that a man has devoted his whole personality to maintaining such a pose. And Dickens was at the least a versatile actor, who could throw himself easily into a thousand such poses. More than one brilliant individual, in modern times, has made his intellectual fortune by following out one vein of humour because it was individual. But Dickens was a labyrinth of such veins of humour and could follow them all up simultaneously. It might be the fashion in a whole society for a whole season to talk like Mr. Mantalini, and to get the richest effects out of that rococo affectation, rather as Mr. P. G. Wodehouse gets the richest effects out of the limp language of Archie. But Dickens could talk like Mr. Mantalini and talk like Mr. Vincent Crummles as well. It might be a literary game or joke to find appropriate quotations like those of Swiveller and Micawber ; but Dickens could play that game and twenty other games at the same time. Nor need the argument be merely hypothetical ; in one case at least it is actually historical. Take, for the sake of argument, the case of the character of Skimpole. The humour of that artistic irresponsibility, of that insolent childishness which lives for beauty alone, the fun of that delicate detachment from conduct, the irony of that innocent contempt for the Philistine ; all that joke was worked for all it was worth by Wilde and the Decadents of the 'nineties. They worked the joke wittily and well, but it was the only joke they had. Take it at its very best ; take the most airy incongruities of such artistic detachment out of the *Green Carnation* or *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and you will not find anything that strikes the note so exactly as the passage in which Mr. Skimpole receives his baker's bill, with gentle remonstrance referring to the beauty of the sunshine and the flowers. "Do not, I beseech you, interpose between me and a scene so sublime the absurd figure of an angry baker." If Wilde had ever thought of that, he would have been proud to write it. But Wilde was not content merely to write it, but went on to live it ; and threw away his life upon that one isolated joke. The Decadent remained rigid in that one particular pose of humour ; and passed on his way despising Dickens without knowing that he was himself only one of the Dickens characters. He devoted himself to it like a monstrous martyr of evil ; he followed it into the shadow of death and hell, so much was he resolved to take his one joke seriously. And meanwhile Dickens, having made that joke among a hundred others, had forgotten it and passed on to new creations ; he was already writing in the next few pages about the widely and wildly different humour of Chadband or of Mrs. Bayham Badger. He had already seized, in the oratory of Chadband, the root of something infinitely ridiculous in the very nature of the rhetorical question. Mr. Chadband was already asking questions which he did not want answered, or which he insisted on answering himself. He was already



writing, "If the master of this house went out into the highways and bye-ways, and saw an eel, and were to return and say unto the mistress of this house, 'Sarah, rejoice with me for I have seen an elephant,' would that be the Trewth?" That passage is pure imagination; it is a vision.

These positive merits are the things that matter. That Dickens had a great many demerits as a writer is too obvious to be important. Though in his later works he took on more of the modern ambitions of psychology and artistic construction, he never lost the melodramatic and farcical conventions of his youth. He became a realist only by comparison with himself. *Bleak House* is better constructed than *Oliver Twist*, but not better constructed than *Armada*. *David Copperfield* is more quietly realistic than *Nicholas Nickleby*, but not more so than *Framley Parsonage*. And these later novels cover the chief turn of his career; for his complete satisfaction with the old comic novel practically petered out in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, where he himself seems to have grown dissatisfied with it, and deliberately redeemed it with the brilliant parenthesis of the satire on America. This novel was really the next after *The Old Curiosity Shop*; for I think *Barnaby Rudge* really stands apart with the later *Tale of Two Cities*; exceptional excursions that had rather the character of foreign travel, in search of the picturesque rather than in acceptance of the daily humours of humanity. Then follows *Dombey and Son*, which was a sort of transition, and with *David Copperfield* he begins the more serious and more modern novels: *David Copperfield*, *Hard Times*, *Bleak House*, *Great Expectations*, *Little Dorrit*, and *Our Mutual Friend*, with the broken epilogue of *Edwin Drood*. But the modern seriousness still has very much of the ancient farce; some of the flights of Mr. Podsnap are as preposterously sublime as those of Mr. Pecksniff, and the epitaph of Mrs. Sapsea is as theatrical as a poster of Mr. Crummles. If this exaggeration is a fault, it was a fault of Dickens; and even of the later Dickens. But there are faults which a more subtle criticism might recognise or admit. He never quite understood that while there is a most excellent thing called exuberant humour, there ought to be no such thing as exuberant pathos. A man may give himself up gloriously to his laughter; but he ought always to be resisting his tears. Pathos can only be brief and stoical; and the one really pathetic thing in Dickens is the talk of old Weller about his dead shrew of a wife; precisely because there the author had wallowed too deep in Wellerian fun to wallow in sentimental sorrow. It is also urged, and not without truth, that Dickens had a trick of taking one element or train of thought in a man and drawing it out to infinity like a conjurer's reels out of a hat, leaving the rest of the man behind. It is enough to answer here that there are few such conjurers, with the hat or with the head. To those who condemn Dickens for mere exaggeration, we may merely make the



suggestion that they should go up to the next man they meet, and begin to exaggerate him. They will soon find that, so far from understanding everything, they do not understand anything, even enough to exaggerate it.

## § 3

## WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

William Makepeace Thackeray was born in Calcutta in 1811, educated at Charterhouse and Trinity, Cambridge. He married in 1836, and his first book, *The Paris Sketch Book* was published in 1840. In the following year appeared a collection of *Comic Tales and Sketches*, which had first been published in magazines. In the same year Thackeray published *The Hoggarty Diamond*, *The Shabby Genteel Story*, *Barry Lyndon*, and *Men's Wives*. In 1842 he joined the staff of *Punch* as writer and draughtsman, and five years later *Vanity Fair* was published in monthly numbers. It was followed by *Pendennis*, *Esmond*, *The Newcomes*, and that charming children's story *The Rose and the Ring*. In January 1860 the *Cornhill Magazine* was published for the first time, with Thackeray as its editor, and his *Round About Papers* were published in that magazine. His last book was *Dennis Duval*. He died in 1863.

Thackeray was never really happy as a novel-writer. He once described novel-writing as "a dreadful trade." Had the financial returns been the same, he would have vastly preferred to write history—*The Four Georges* is a specimen of his quality. "I like history," he once said; "it is so gentlemanly."

Dickens has been dealt with here at some length because he really gives its vitality to the Victorian age. Take away Dickens and the Victorian age would really be only Victorian; in the sense implied by those who call everything conventional and commonplace Victorian. There were other powerful novelists in the time; but none that seem also to be outside the time. Dickens alone began by producing an epic and ended by leaving a legend. But in his own time and long after there was a curious custom of recognising a rivalry, and therefore a sort of equality, between Dickens and Thackeray. Nor can it be denied that this convention is also a convenience. It is a convenience in this place; because Thackeray, coming soon after Dickens, does represent the way in which the Victorian novel moved away from the old comic novel, and all that it gained and lost. Thackeray in one sense also began with broad humour; but even when it was broad humour it was very grim humour. He began by making fun of a footman; but it is only necessary to compare his footman, I will not say with Sam Weller, but with any of Sam Weller's friends, the footmen



at the Swarry, to realise how little there is of high spirits in the other's high life below stairs. Thackeray's footman took service with Mr. Deuceace and not Mr. Pickwick ; he was a detective as well as a domestic, and he dogged Mr. Deuceace through many years and through many novels. There is a passage at the end of a chapter in the *Book of Snobs* which rises to real nobility of style, and expresses the real instinct or intention of Thackeray. It describes the huge house of the bankrupt Lord Carabas, with its vast and fearful four-post bedstead, in which a murder might be committed at one end without being known at the other. It touches on little tales about tradesmen and servants, and concludes : " And have we not after all reason to be thankful that we are of the middle rank, and are out of the reach of the amazing arrogance and the astounding meanness, to which that wretched old victim is obliged to mount and to descend."

The meanness of magnificence was from the first the imaginative motive of Thackeray. To make a study of it he was sometimes sordid ; to make a contrast to it he was sometimes sentimental. But the passage I have quoted remains the expression of his chief emotion ; and it is worthy of remark that even in those few words there are many of the essentials of the Victorian culture. The notion of the middle class as the normal of humanity was very Victorian. And the notion of the meanness of magnificence was often extended to suggest something more questionable than the evil of arrogance or the humiliation of bankruptcy. There was a feeling that a herald in a tabard, a bishop in a mitre, a king in a crown, or even a soldier in a uniform, was absurd, because he was magnificent. It never crossed the true Victorian mind that some might say that a merchant in a top-hat with mutton-chop whiskers was absurd because he was not magnificent. In this respect Victorianism was somewhat cut off from history, and therefore from humanity. In its trust in middle-class things it was somewhat separated from popular things ; and swords and sceptres, mitres and blazonry, are very popular things.

Thackeray really makes his entrance into Victorian literature with *Vanity Fair*. He had paved the way for it with many smaller studies mostly of the Deuceace kind ; but it is with this great work that the world becomes conscious of the man who had set out to satirise the world, or at least the worldliness of the world. For the work attempted in the tale, and even implied in the title, is undoubtedly that of setting all that society in a clear light and a cold air that would wither it with truth. For this purpose he made the scheme of it the story of two girls, who set out from school together in the very first chapter. One of them sets out more or less successfully to conquer the world, and yet is in a sense conquered ; the other allows the world to crush her, and yet is not wholly crushed. Some injustice is done to the novelist's art by those who do not allow for the



deliberate structural simplicity of this contrast. Those who are content to say that they "cannot stand Amelia," or that Thackeray's good women are duffers, do not see the point of the story. Thackeray did not think that all good women were as soft as Amelia; he suggested a much more militant type in the scene where Laura refuses Pendennis, or in many of the nobler moments of Ethel Newcome. He deliberately made Amelia as silly as possible and Becky as clever as possible, in order to ask his final question. He asks whether one can really get much more out of the world, even by being as clever as Becky, than one can get even while being as silly as Amelia. The former suffers as much from success as the latter from failure; indeed, the former not only fails when she succeeds, but fails because she succeeds. The question thus asked is not cynical, though it might be called sceptical; it would be truer to say that it is sceptical even of cynicism. But even in the scepticism there is the more humane moral than Thackeray meant and indeed loved to draw. You cannot crush the affections out of a person like Amelia; in a sense she is too soft to be crushed; and it may well be questioned whether even thwarted affection is not more contented than thwarted ambition. To bring out this distinction it was artistically inevitable to exaggerate the meekness of the victim; in order to end, as with a kind of Christian irony, with the question of whether the victim was not really better off than the victor. But this justification from design is rather left out of account in the criticism of Thackeray. The reason, I think, lies in Thackeray's narrative method. It has the superficial air of being quite without design; and in that sense any one of his chapters is a chapter of accidents. He seems to be rambling through the story and stopping to gossip with the characters; and three-quarters of the tale comes to the readers by rumour or hearsay; by the gossip of the clubs or the reports of passers-by. Yet it was precisely by this method that Thackeray did manage to build up a massive effect of actuality. Only Dickens can tell a Dickens story; it all rests on the oath of his genius and vision. The story is told by so brilliant a story-teller that we cannot quite forget that he might be a liar. But in *Vanity Fair* we seem to hear a confusion of voices; and to know what twenty or thirty people thought of Lord Steyne or Miss Crawley. This does give a certain sense of solid things that can be seen from all sides like statues, which Dickens never gave by his flat though flamboyant portraits. But the effect is gained by a multitude of little touches; most of them indirect and all of them incidental. The method seems the most unmethodical in the world; it seems so informal as to be almost formless. So that when we refer back to the original form of the whole story, and conceive it as a contrast between two feminine figures, the defence seems too startling a simplification. The artist is made the victim of an argument in a circle,





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"DR. JOHNSON IN THE ANTE-ROOM OF LORD CHESTERFIELD, WAITING FOR AN AUDIENCE, 1748"

By E. M. WARD, R.A.

The "Great Cham" is seen in an unwelcome role: waiting for an interview with his patron, Lord Chesterfield, Secretary of State, who is seen through the far door. Such experiences of much hated servility caused him to give in his famous Dictionary the definition of a Patron as: "Commonly a wretch who supports with insolence, and is paid with flattery."



*Reproduced by courtesy of The Victoria and Albert Museum*

**"DOLLY VARDEN"**

BY W. P. FRITH, R.A.

The characters of Dickens' novels are so familiar to us all that no description other than his is necessary. Dolly Varden, the heroine of *Barnaby Rudge*, will always be remembered as the buxom bewitching Dolly who loved Joseph Willett and drove Simon Tappertit to despair. The Victorian story-painter has caught here her charm and coquetry.



of a kind that is not uncommon ; as when men argue, that Catholics cannot be philosophers, and therefore philosophers must secretly have been heretics. The critic first accuses the artist of being artless, and then forbids him to plead the success of his art.

More completely than in most cases, Thackeray's great book represents all his other books. In *Pendennis* he varied the fable, but hardly the moral ; and the moral is again a query. He makes a realistic and representative youth pass himself through the two phases of innocence and experience, and be the victim first of calf-love and then of worldly matchmaking. And we are haunted with the same question about his first more heroic folly ; whether he was not better at the beginning and might not even have been better at the end. In *The Newcomes* he returns to the full fable of the fox and the lamb ; only that innocence is represented not by a young girl, but by an old soldier. To all these Thackerayan qualities must be added a natural appetite for the eighteenth century ; with his humane scepticism and worldly wisdom he was very much of an eighteenth-century character. This taste led him to the *tour de force* of *Esmond* ; in which he managed to write a whole realistic romance in the diction of Queen Anne. It is in some ways the finest and certainly the most fastidious and dignified of his books ; for its dignity really rises into tragedy. The sequel to it, *The Virginians*, is something of an anti-climax ; and there appears in it a certain expansion of the method of gossip into mere garrulity. An element of delicate and disarming egoism has always run through his narrative, and it cannot be understood without some reference to the sentiment which flowed more and more freely towards the end, till it finally not only diluted but almost submerged the story.

There is something highly picturesque about Thackeray's pose as a philosopher ; his refrain of reflections like that of the chorus of a Greek play. But in a deeper sense we may well say that what was the matter with this philosopher was that he had no philosophy. The point is not indeed peculiar to him ; but it is what makes him typical of many men of his time ; it is what some of them meant when they said they were agnostics. His ultimate vision of things was vague rather than lucid. It is true that he loved a sort of lyrical meditation, in a literary sense very charming, upon his favourite motto of *Vanitas Vanitatum*. But though he often meditated upon it, it is by no means clear exactly what he meant by it. There are two alternative things that men generally mean when they say they have found all the world vanity. One is that they believe so ecstatically in the worth of something beyond the world they see that this world is comparatively worthless. The other is that they believe in nothing beyond the world they see, and find that world intrinsically worthless. They are the direct contrary of each other, like many people



who say the same thing. To the first sort of man the colours of paradise are so vivid that against them green grass looks grey or red roses brown ; to the other all possible colours are prejudged as colourless. The former only dismisses this life because it is short ; that is, because there is so little of it ; but by his very doctrine of the soul he obviously wants more of it. The latter is intrinsically weary of life, and would presumably be still wearier of immortality. Now Thackeray was certainly neither of these things ; he did not go to the extreme either of the pietist or the pessimist. He certainly did not think of this life, with its good dinners and good friends, as a thing to be sacrificed to some supernatural certainty ; but neither did he think that a good dinner was not worth eating or a good friend not worth having ; he was the very last man in the world to think either. Like most of the Victorians, he was reverent even when he was not religious. But like most of the Victorians also, he was cheerful even when he was not happy. If he had only the vague Victorian faith, he had the whole of the vague Victorian hope ; and above all, the most sincere belief in the rather vague Victorian charity. This nineteenth-century mood was as far as possible both from the higher and the lower madness ; the moods of the martyr and the suicide. For it was almost the definition of its view that we know nothing about life except that it is worth living. The connection of this creed with a cry that all is vanity is really not at all clear. It will be found, I think, that this Thackerayan philosophy is almost the reverse of a philosophy. It is a sort of sentiment, among the hundred sentiments that float in constant mutability through the mind that is not cleared by any philosophy. As sentiments they are perfectly sane, even when they are most sentimental. The emotion or mood most common in the mind of Thackeray was the very healthy and humane one which is called up by light yet melancholy music and by the memories of our youth. This is not philosophy in the sense of detached thought or disinterested thought. But it is the proof that there is such a thing as disinterested emotion. There are, especially in later life, feelings that float unattached to anything or anybody, and which are yet not only feelings but affections ; if they are almost impersonal affections.

Indeed, Thackeray does make of the moral affections, to use the phrase of Maeterlinck, a sort of treasure of the humble. Perhaps the nearest parallel in letters to what Thackeray did really mean, or rather feel, about the vanity of things, may be found in those magnificent lines beginning "The glories of our blood and state." And Shirley might almost have been thinking of such things as the simplicity of the Dobbins and Tom Newcomes of Thackeray's fiction, when he ended upon that quiet note :

Only the actions of the just  
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.



It is sometimes assumed that caricaturists like Dickens deal in types and realists like Thackeray in individuals. But indeed there may be two words about that ; and there is another side or at least another aspect of the question. After reading several books by Thackeray at a stretch, there is really much more of an impression that the human race runs into types, even though they are undoubtedly real types. After reading several books by Dickens at a stretch, there is really much more impression that the possibilities of permutation are infinite, and that new and unexpected people may turn up the next minute. Thackeray much more than Dickens had the tendency to repeat himself. But it must be said with the assumption that he had the right to repeat himself, in the sense that history repeats itself. But fancy never repeats itself. In this way the creations of Dickens were more unique, and in that sense more individual. Perhaps there was never a Quilp in real life ; but there was never another Quilp even in Dickens. He is as much a monstrosity in that world of fiction as he would be in the world of fact. When Dickens wants to make another villain he makes a totally different sort of villain, at least in externals ; a sketch like Carker or a sketch like Uriah Heep. But at the end of a study of Thackeray we are conscious of a type of villain even though it is a true type ; we have met Captain Blackball when he was passing under the name of Mr. Deuceace ; we have known Mr. Brand Firmin under the shabbier disguise of Mr. Hooker Walker. Thackeray does suggest, in a way that is wonderfully suggestive, a world that is swarming with Blackballs and Hooker Walkers.

As a realist he is right, for no doubt it is. But nobody can say that Dickens suggests a world that is swarming with Quilps and Heeps. As with the mediæval mason, the gargoyles at the corners of his tower are all different ; and he never carves the same chimera twice. I am not urging this difference between the great novelists as a matter of superior merit in either ; as a matter of fact, it implies the highest merit in both. The whole burden of Thackeray is truly a sort of refrain, saying that the world is round and all things return at last. The whole inspiration of Dickens is to the effect that nature is new and inexhaustible, and that imagination is even more full of future surprises. But the distinction can truly be noted and repeated—that the ultimate effect of the Thackerayan view of life tends more to a classification of types than does the Dickensian ; and this is still true if we choose to state it in the form that one only had the poetry and the other the science of human nature. Thackeray's individuals, even when real individuals, do turn into types ; because there are so many such individuals. Dickens's types do turn into individuals, because nobody else could imagine such types. Dickens himself did not attempt to imagine one of them again.



The lack of real philosophy, already noted, will be found important later on. Traditions become prejudices when they are without a philosophy. Thackeray, even more than Dickens, was in some ways rather too English an Englishman. If there was one thing of which he was prouder even than of criticising the world as a sage, it was of knowing the world as a traveller. But though he did in one way know the world, it was only too much as a traveller; sometimes, one is compelled to say, as a tourist. But Thackeray really is the insular Englishman, who is never so insular as when he is sitting in a café in the very heart of the Continent. His queer and rabid irritation against the Irish was not only insular but provincial. He had the fundamental assumption that the English gentleman is the standard of all things; and he may have seen men and cities, but he had never seen citizens.

There follows on Thackeray a series that is not truly chronological, but is none the less historical. For taking up the tendencies of the time more or less where the Thackeray of *Vanity Fair* had left them, we find two things happening. Perhaps it would be more true to say that in one case something happens and in the other case nothing happens. On one side Victorian England continued its negative demand to be that paradise of the legends, the happy country that has no history. We might rather say that instead of one public history, it had a thousand private histories. But they were the histories of families rather than the histories of cities or nations; and the feeling about them was expressed in fiction rather than in literal record. Of this Victorian world we may say that literature retired into private life.

### READING LIST

#### CHARLES DICKENS:

Chapman & Hall publish numerous editions, among which may be mentioned the Gadshill Edition, edited with Introductions and Notes by Andrew Lang.

Macmillan publish *The Works of Charles Dickens*, with Introductions by Charles Dickens, the Younger.

There are various cheap editions of Dickens, published by Chapman & Hall, J. M. Dent & Sons, T. Nelson & Sons and others.

John Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens*, special illustrated edition in 2 vols., edited by B. W. Matz (Chapman & Hall).

Forster's *Life* is also included in some of the editions of Dickens published by the Oxford University Press.

G. K. Chesterton's *Charles Dickens* (Methuen).

Sir A. W. Ward's *Dickens* in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).



*Charles Dickens*, by Una Pope-Hennessy, is a modern life including new material (Chatto and Windus).

*Charles Dickens, and other Victorians*, by Arthur Quiller-Couch (Cambridge University Press).

*The Dickens World*, by Humphry House (Oxford University Press).

W. M. THACKERAY :

The Centenary Biographical Edition, 26 vols., edited by Lady Ritchie (John Murray).

The Oxford Edition of Thackeray, edited by George Saintsbury (Oxford University Press).

There are various cheap editions of Thackeray's works. All his principal books are obtainable in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

Lewis Melville's *W. M. Thackeray, a Biography*, 2 vols. (John Lane, 1910).

Anthony Trollope's *Thackeray* in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

Charles Whibley's *Thackeray* in the Modern English Writers Series (Blackwood).

*Dickens and Thackeray*, by Oliver Elton (Arnold).

## THE VICTORIAN NOVELISTS

## § I

THE domestic note, evident both in the splendidly human stories of Dickens and the gentlemanly novels of Thackeray, is also the note of the writings of Anthony Trollope. Like Thackeray, Trollope was interested in "good families." He went to both Harrow and Winchester, and, for many years, he was a responsible official in the Post Office. He belonged to the governing class. He was a mighty foxhunter. He had inside knowledge of upper-class society in London as well as of the life, the very exclusive life, of English cathedral cities. In addition, he inherited literary ability, his mother being also a successful novelist. Trollope, after a long period of neglect, has enjoyed a tremendous revival in the post-war years. This may be because in our insecure world we look nostalgically to the one he depicts. His novels have an historical as well as a literary interest, for the novelist accents the Victorian view of men and women, not as individuals concerned with their own souls and their individual problems, but as members of small well-bred circles, whose duty it was to fulfil their social duties and to respect the conventions and traditions. The family plays the same important part in Trollope's novels as it does in Thackeray's *The Newcomes*. As it is evident that man is of little importance except in so far as he is a social being, there is a greater human interest in the Victorian influenced by obligations to his fellows than in the heroes and heroines of modern novels, who are obsessed with the idea that men and women can in any circumstances "live their own lives." At the same time, it must be confessed that the Victorian obligations appear to us artificial and often absurd.

Trollope was a prolific writer. The development of the serial was a great opportunity for a man who regarded literature as a profession, demanding daily industry and the regular and machine-like production of "copy." Trollope unquestionably wrote too much, and though he was concerned with the truthful representation of English middle-class life his novels have none of the supremely successful realism of a Jane Austen.

He was born in 1815, and his first notable book, *The Warden*, was published when he was forty. This was followed by *Barchester Towers*,



the best of his novels. In addition to his many novels Trollope wrote an excellent life of Thackeray. He died in 1882, and his autobiography was published in 1883. There has been an enormous revival of interest in Trollope's work in recent years, and many new editions have been published.

## § 2

If it be true that mankind may be divided into the drabs and the flamboyants, then Trollope was certainly a drab and Bulwer Lytton was a flamboyant. Lytton was a novelist, a dramatist, and a politician. His first novel, *Falkland*, was published when he was twenty-four, and he was made a baronet when he was thirty-two. He was an exponent of the insincere-posing Byronism, which could hardly avoid being ridiculous even when as in his case it was added to great ability. Lytton's second novel, *Pelham*, with its note of dandyism, roused the rugged wrath of Carlyle and was satirised in *Sartor Resartus*.

As a politician, Lytton changed his opinions—he began life as a Whig and finished as a Tory—and as a writer he had many moods. He wrote historical novels like *Rienzi*, *The Last of the Barons*, and *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1835), which, without the poetry of Scott or the fine drama of Dumas at his best, are workmanlike and readable. He wrote domestic fiction in *The Caxtons* (1850). He wrote terror stories like *Eugene Aram* and mystery stories in *A Strange Story* and *The Haunted and the Haunters*, this last far and away the most successful of all his fiction, and indeed one of the best mystery stories in the language. And in *The Coming Race* he anticipated H. G. Wells and drew a fantastic picture of the future. In addition he wrote plays—*The Lady of Lyons*, *Richelieu*, and *Money*—which, with all their highly coloured sentimentality, held the stage until the end of the Irving régime at the Lyceum.

Bulwer Lytton was Colonial Secretary in 1858, and was created Baron Lytton of Knebworth in 1866. He died in 1876.

## § 3

If Lytton was flamboyant, Disraeli was super-flamboyant. Above all other things, Disraeli was a Jew, in his youth frankly a Jewish adventurer, with a love for the gaudy and the over-coloured and a keen eye for the follies, the sins, and the weakness of the world in which he lived, but in which he lived with equal loyalty as a Hebrew and as a Briton. Disraeli was brilliantly clever, perhaps the cleverest man who lived in Victorian England. His novels are theatrical, unreal, exaggerated, but they are always witty, filled with epigrams that are equal to the best of Oscar Wilde

and Whistler. One wearies of the dukes and plutocrats, and the heavily scented luxury of the atmosphere of his stories, but the writing is always stimulating and amusing.

Disraeli wrote his first novel, *Vivian Grey*, when he was twenty-two. Before the beginning of his political career, he had written six other novels, of which, *Henrietta Temple*, a hectic love-story, and *Venetia*, founded on the life of Byron, are the most considerable. In the forties of last century he wrote *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, and *Tancred*. Two more novels were written at the end of his life, *Lothair* in 1870, and *Endymion* in 1880, when he was an old man of seventy-four.

Of all his novels, *Sybil* is the most interesting and the most important. In it Disraeli describes, with knowledge and sympathy, the sorry condition of the people of England at the end of the first stage of the Industrial Revolution, conditions that inspired the ideals of the Young England party—dreams of an aristocracy rescuing the poor from their middle-class oppressors—and afterwards impelled the pious Tory, Lord Shaftesbury, to spend his life in the long fight to pass the Factory Acts. *Sybil* is a real historical document, for despite its florid style it is a revelation of the life of the workers of the early nineteenth century, as *Piers Plowman* is a revelation of their life in the fourteenth century.

#### § 4

Wilkie Collins was a master of melodrama. There is, indeed, no better melodramatic novel in the English language than his *The Woman in White*. In a sense Collins was a disciple of Dickens. He had something of the master's supreme power for creating character, but he was unconcerned with the social abuses which inspired Dickens with the righteous, cleansing laughter that created Bumble and Mr. Gradgrind. Wilkie was a storyteller, a careful, industrious teller of tales. It might almost be said that he was the first of the long line of writers of crime stories, and, though he has had a countless number of followers, few of them have equalled his *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868).

It is interesting to calculate the number of familiar characters that the great English writers have given to the average English reader—Shakespeare and Dickens a legion, Scott and Thackeray perhaps half a dozen each, Fielding, Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, George Meredith, Thomas Hardy two or three. Wilkie Collins has given us at least one—Count Fosco, that large, fat, cold, and most consummate villain (copied a dozen times in recent fiction), and to have given the world one character to remember is no mean achievement.

Wilkie Collins was born in 1824 and died in 1889.



## § 5

Charles Reade was ten years younger than Wilkie Collins. He was another example of Victorian enthusiastic industry and perfervid indignation against cruelty and injustice. Dickens's great discovery was that the best, perhaps indeed the only way to destroy evil is to make it ridiculous. Charles Reade did not possess the saving grace of humour. Evil, the persecution of the first offender and the brutal handling of the helpless imbecile, moved him to furious wrath, and, like one of the characters in Henry Arthur Jones's play, he "bashed away at the minxes." His honest righteous wrath finds its best literary expression in *It is Never Too Late to Mend* (1856), a well-told story with a purpose. There was a purpose in most of Reade's novels, but, like Wilkie Collins, he was a born story-teller.

His best book, *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861), was written when for once he forgot the wickedness of his own times. Its scene is the beginning of the Renaissance, and its theme is the life of the father of Erasmus. Allowing for the prejudices of a typically obstinate Victorian, *The Cloister and the Hearth* is an admirable example of the historical novel in which the atmosphere of a bygone age is successfully reproduced.

Reade was a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and a barrister, though he never practised. He wrote many plays as well as novels, and his first literary success was made when he was forty with *Peg Woffington*. He died in 1884.

## § 6

Charles Kingsley will always be remembered as the author of *Westward Ho!* (1855) that dramatic, prejudiced, utterly unhistoric story of Elizabethan England, which has had an immense influence in forming the characters of English boys, because, bad as Kingsley's history certainly was, his hero, Amyas Leigh, was a splendid manly man. With all its defects, *Westward Ho!* is one of the great English novels of adventure, and its vivid account of the defeat of the Spanish Armada remains an inspiration of patriotism.

Kingsley wrote two other historical novels, *Hypatia*, a story of Alexandria at the end of the Roman Empire, and *Hereward the Wake*, a tale of the hopeless war of the East Anglians against the Norman invaders.

Kingsley was a Christian Socialist, influenced by the social teachings of Ruskin, and his *Yeast* and *Alton Locke* are powerful demonstrations of the plight of the poor in the heyday of Victorian prosperity. He was another writer of striking versatility. He was a poet. His *Heroes* is a delightful book for boys, and his *The Water Babies* is still one of the best books for a nursery library.

For many years Charles Kingsley was the Rector of Eversley in Hamp-

shire. Afterwards he was Professor of Modern History at Cambridge and a Canon of Westminster. Perhaps the greatest mistake of his life was a famous controversy with Cardinal Newman, in which he certainly came off second best. He was born in 1819 and died in 1875. His brother, Henry (1830-1876), the author of *Ravenshoe* (1861), was also a novelist of distinction; his *Geoffrey Hamlyn* (1859), *Austin Elliot* (1863), and *The Hillyars and the Burtons* (1865) are also eminently readable; during the Franco-Prussian War, he acted as war correspondent for a famous newspaper. As a young man, he passed some adventurous years in Australia.

Kingsley's best work as a poet is to be found in the Ballads, that have the fine manliness of *Westward Ho!* and there is charm and sympathy in the well-known *The Sands of Dee*:

“O Mary, go and call the cattle home,  
And call the cattle home,  
And call the cattle home  
Across the sands of Dee”;  
The western wind was wild and dank with foam,  
And all alone went she.  
The western tide crept up along the sand,  
And o'er and o'er the sand,  
And round and round the sand,  
As far as eye could see.  
The rolling mist came down and hid the land;  
And never home came she.  
“Oh! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair—  
A tress of golden hair,  
A drownèd maiden's hair  
Above the nets at sea?  
Was never salmon yet that shone so fair  
Among the stakes on Dee.”  
They rowed her in across the rolling foam,  
The cruel crawling foam,  
The cruel hungry foam,  
To her grave beside the sea:  
But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home  
Across the sands of Dee.

## § 7

In 1846 a volume of poems was published under the names of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, the pen-names of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë, the daughters of a Yorkshire clergyman. Charlotte, the eldest sister, was born in 1816. The Brontës were of Irish extraction. Their means were limited, their home was bleak and dreary, and they were all sickly and what is nowadays called “temperamental.” Charlotte Brontë was, indeed,



a thoroughly unhappy young woman. Her life was uneventful. Her schooldays were miserable. She was for a time a governess, and hated the experience. She escaped from Yorkshire for a while to live in Brussels, and, when she was thirty-eight, she married one of her father's curates. She died in 1855.

The character of Charlotte Brontë has an unusual literary importance because her novels are all largely autobiographical, the transcription of her own experience and her own dissatisfaction. Most fiction is to some extent autobiographical, and most novelists who have been at all prolific have written at least one book based on the incidents of their own lives. *David Copperfield* is what may be called seasoned autobiography, fiction certainly founded on fact; and H. G. Wells, to mention one modern example, appears as a character in several of his novels. But the novelist of genius generally has the power to appreciate the motives and the characters of persons entirely different from himself, and possesses a catholic interest in human endeavour, in human struggle, and in human failure. Charlotte Brontë never saw beyond the end of her own nose. Her vision was as narrow as her life.

The book of poems was not a success, and all three sisters, eager for expression and for escape from their depressing environment, turned their minds to the writing of fiction. Charlotte's first novel, *The Professor*, was returned to the author by publisher after publisher, and it was only after some hesitation that her second book, *Jane Eyre*, was published by Messrs. Smith, Elder in 1847. It was an immediate and unqualified success. Thackeray praised it, and the daughter of the dour Yorkshire rector became at once a famous writer. She published only two other novels, *Shirley* in 1849 and *Villette* in 1852. Both these novels are transcriptions of phases of her own experience. Her sister Emily is the chief figure in *Shirley*, which also contains bitter pictures of her father's curates. *Villette* is the story of her life in Brussels.

Charlotte Brontë's small output is in striking contrast to the prodigality of her great contemporaries. The amazing creative power of Dickens was the result of his boundless sympathy and interest in life. Charlotte Brontë had no such impetus to creation, and Professor Saintsbury is probably justified in his suggestion that, even if she had lived longer, she would have written little more.

Her fame depends on one novel, *Jane Eyre*. The early chapters are the record of her sufferings as a schoolgirl and as a governess. The latter part of the novel, the love-story of Jane and the masterful Rochester, is realistic romance. There is nothing flamboyant about Jane. She is entirely drab, but Rochester falls in love with this plain little practical woman as men, if they are wise, generally prefer the drab woman to the flamboyant. Its



insistence on this fact, always denied by the romantics, gives *Jane Eyre* its value. It is curious to note that, when it was written, *Jane Eyre* was regarded by the prim Victorians as rather daring and improper. To us it is a very model of propriety.

G. K. Chesterton has said that "Charlotte Brontë embodies a contrast which is at least a curiosity of literature. It is expressed even externally in the image of the demure governess who passes through such a tempestuous scene to the hiding-place of a maniac. But the contrast was psychological and innate. Her consciousness was in many ways Puritanical and even prim, while her subconsciousness was a sea of passion ; or she might be compared to a Baptist chapel built on a volcano. But the contrast was none the less a character illustrating the Victorian conditions ; and only to be understood by a comprehension of those conditions. The paradox of Victorianism was that it actually had liberty, through not having enlargement. It was a local liberty, and in her might sometimes be called almost a parochial anarchy."

Less distinguished is the literary work of Anne Brontë, although her novel *Agnes Grey* was hailed by George Moore as "the most perfect prose narrative in English literature." Emily Brontë (1818-1848) was unquestionably a writer of genius. Her one novel, *Wuthering Heights*, is a gloomy masterpiece.

Of *Wuthering Heights*, Chesterton writes :

"It is a wonderful effect of stark imagination, without humility or humour or anything that could humanise so inhuman a vision. But so far as that story is concerned, the case is still the same as that of her sister ; it is a local and almost secret liberation. It is as if it were meant to show that this small island yet contains moorlands large enough for a great wind to lose itself at will. But there was another side of Emily Brontë which appears in her poems, which suggests that she had in some rugged individual way found a philosophy more suited to such elemental emotions than the rather panic-stricken Protestantism which her sister guarded so jealously in her bewildering Belgian experience in *Villette*. Emily Brontë had a sort of stoical pantheism or nature-worship, such as has often been the religion of such proud and unhappy human beings in European history ; and that very fact links her a little more, if unconsciously, with the more conscious European culture."

Emily Brontë's poems reflect even more of her own inner life. Matthew Arnold wrote of her as one

whose soul,  
Knew no fellow for might,  
Passion, vehemence, grief,  
Daring, since Byron died ;



and time leaves this verdict as yet untouched. Here it is possible to represent her poetry only by her poignant and valorous *Last Lines*, which Swinburne accounted to be worthy of "reverent remembrance":

No coward soul is mine,  
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere ;  
I see Heaven's glories shine,  
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

O God, within my breast,  
Almighty, ever-present Deity !  
Life—that in me has rest,  
As I—undying Life—have power in Thee !

Vain are the thousand creeds  
That move men's hearts ; unutterably vain :  
Worthless as withered weeds,  
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main.

To waken doubt in one  
Holding so fast by Thine infinity ;  
So surely anchored on  
The steadfast rock of immortality.

With wide embracing love  
Thy spirit animates eternal years,  
Pervades and broods above,  
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.

Though earth and man were gone,  
And suns and universes ceased to be,  
And Thou were left alone,  
Every existence would exist in Thee.

## § 8

Mrs. Gaskell, the friend and biographer of Charlotte Brontë, was born in 1810, and married in 1832. Her first success was made with *Mary Barton*, in which, with something of Disraeli's horror of the dark side of Victorian industrialism, she paints a realistic picture of life in a northern manufacturing town. *Cranford*, published five years later, is Mrs. Gaskell's most considerable achievement. Its pleasant pages, with their description of nineteenth-century domestic life, might almost have been written by Jane Austen, if one can imagine Jane without her irony and with a far greater sympathy. Mrs. Gaskell died in 1865 after a singularly happy life.

## § 9

"In the novelist known as George Eliot," writes G. K. Chesterton, "the contemporary culture and emancipation become entirely conscious. She is distinguished at first sight from the great novelists already considered by the fact that the free thought has come to the surface, even if some would feel that it became more superficial even in coming to the surface. She certainly did possess a philosophy; eventually we might say that the philosophy possessed her. But her progress is itself an illustration of what has been suggested here; that the free controversies of the Continent filtered slowly through a sort of Victorian veil or web into England; and that many things were unconscious and elemental before they became conscious and ethical."

George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) was born in 1819, and the first forty years of her life were spent in the Midlands. Her agnosticism was shown by the fact that her first literary work was a translation of Strauss's very German *Life of Jesus*. She was for a time on the staff of the liberal *Westminster Review*, her contributions including reviews and translations of other German sceptical essays. Mary Ann Evans was as plain as she was learned, and in his autobiography Herbert Spencer naïvely records that, though the thought of marriage with her had occurred to him, he was deterred from making a proposal because, philosopher though he was, a certain measure of good looks was essential to him in a woman. George Henry Lewes, the critic, was less affected by beauty. He and Miss Evans became intimate friends and lived together until his death in 1878. She afterwards married a Mr. Cross, and died in 1880.

The pen-name, George Eliot, was first used when *The Scenes of Clerical Life* appeared serially in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1857. Her next and perhaps her greatest book, *Adam Bede*, was published in the next year. In it George Eliot used her intimate knowledge of the rural life of Warwickshire, writing of its people with almost a Dickens sympathy and humour. Mrs. Poyser is indeed the one character created by her that has something like immortality. The Midlands are the scene of her two next novels, *The Mill on the Floss*, published in 1860, and *Silas Marner*, published in 1861.

The second phase of George Eliot's career, covering the years from 1863 to 1871, saw the publication of *Romola*, *Felix Holt*, and *Middlemarch*. *Romola* is a story of the Italian Renaissance, containing an acute and interesting demonstration of the havoc wrought by weakness of character. *Felix Holt* is a tale of Victorian Radicalism, and *Middlemarch*, obviously largely autobiographical in spirit though not in incidents, is a study of nineteenth-century "advanced" feminism. These three novels had an immense popularity when they were published, but they are not to be



compared in genuine human interest with the novels of the first period. The atmosphere of philosophy and science, in which George Eliot lived, a hopeless atmosphere for any artist, had its result in *Daniel Deronda*, published in 1876. This is, without question, the duller of all George Eliot's novels, in these days almost unreadable. *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such* appeared in the year before her death.

Summarising George Eliot's novels, G. K. Chesterton says :

" *The Mill on the Floss* was a more or less straightforward and convincing study of the relations of brother and sister, and *Romola* a plausible historical novel, and a story whose central stalk is the broken reed of one weak character ; but even in these we seem to have horrible hints of various metaphysical views on the Will, its strength in Tulliver or its weakness in Tito. *Felix Holt* is already too serious to be true, though even here there are the remains of real humour, clinging to his mother. The last novel of all, *Daniel Deronda*, admittedly shows analysis changing into dissolution. Dickens and Thackeray each left an unfinished novel, and George Eliot left a novel that is too much finished. Moreover, when that was finished she was finished ; her particular rationalistic mental process could go no further. But before she came to this final point she had written one book, the last but one, which was also perhaps the greatest ; if only because it unconsciously mirrored the history of her own mind. *Middlemarch* describes the disappointment of a serious girl who married a scholar in the hope of helping in a great work, and finds she has to work in a very hole-and-corner way after all ; for his scholarship and his temper are equally rusty. We might almost say that it has the sad moral that duty can deceive as well as pleasure."

George Eliot was the author of much verse, admirable in sentiment, but without much poetic value. Perhaps her best remembered lines are :

Our deeds still follow from afar,  
And what we have been makes us what we are.

The lesser Victorian novelists include George John Whyte-Melville (1821-1878), who, after an army career and service in the Crimean War, devoted himself to field sports, on which he wrote with acknowledged authority, and to novel-writing. His best-known novels (very good they are, too !) are *Holmby House*, an historical novel dealing with the Civil War of the 1640's, *Katerfalto* (English life about 1770), *The Gladiators*, and *Kate Coventry* : all very readable—and excellently written. Charlotte Yonge (1823-1901), the author of *The Heir of Redclyffe* and *The Daisy Chain* and over a hundred other stories, who was greatly influenced by Keble and the Oxford Movement and, in an odd way, influenced William Morris, Burne-Jones, and the Pre-Raphaelites ; Mrs. Oliphant (1828-1897), a

voluminous writer who has been called a feminine Trollope, and whose two best-remembered novels are *Salem Chapel* and *A Son of the Soil*; and Mark Rutherford (1831-1913), a novelist, deserving far greater popularity than he has ever had, whose novels really describe Victorian nonconformity, and one of whose books, *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, is a masterpiece of fiction.

## READING LIST

For a general study of this period, see Hugh Walker's *The Literature of the Victorian Era* (Cambridge University Press), G. K. Chesterton's *Victorian Literature* (Oxford University Press), and Oliver Elton's *A Survey of English Literature: 1830-1880* (Arnold).

*The Victorians and After*, by Edith Batho and Bonamy Dobrée (Cresset Press).

*Early Victorian Novelists: Essays in Revaluation*, by Lord David Cecil (Constable).

ANTHONY TROLLOPE: The following of Trollope's novels can be obtained in the Everyman's Library (Dent): *Barchester Towers*, *Framley Parsonage*, *The Warden*, *Dr. Thorne*, *Last Chronicles of Barchester* (2 vols.), *The Golden Lion of Granpère*, *Phineas Finn*, *The Small House at Allington*. His *Autobiography* is in the World's Classics.

Many new editions of Trollope's works have been published in response to the recent revival. Notable among them is a new Oxford University Press edition with introductions by Trollope enthusiasts. An excellent small book is *Anthony Trollope, a New Judgement*, by Elizabeth Bowen.

Michael Sadleir: *Trollope: A Commentary* (Constable).

BULWER LYTTON: The following can be obtained in the Everyman's Library (Dent): *Last Days of Pompeii*, *Last of the Barons*, *Harold*, *Rienzi*; *Eugene Aram* in Collins's Pocket Classics.

DISRAELI, LORD BEACONSFIELD: Disraeli's novels, including *Contarini Fleming*, *Vivian Grey*, *Tancred*, *Sybil*, *Henrietta Temple*, *Venetia*, *Lothair*, *Endymion*, are published by Lane.

WILKIE COLLINS: Wilkie Collins's novels are published by Messrs. Chatto & Windus. *The Woman in White*, *No Name*, and *The Moonstone* can be obtained in Messrs. Collins's Illustrated Pocket Classics; the first and third in the World's Classics.

*Wilkie Collins*, by Kenneth Robinson (Bodley Head).

CHARLES READE: Charles Reade's works are published by Messrs. Chatto & Windus; *The Cloister and the Hearth* appears in several "pocket" editions.



CHARLES KINGSLEY : Charles Kingsley's works are published by Messrs, Macmillan.

HENRY KINGSLEY : *Austin Elliot, Geoffrey Hamlyn, Ravenshoe* : the World's Classics.

THE BRONTËS : John Murray publishes the works of the Brontë Sisters in seven volumes. *The Brontës and Other Essays*, by G. F. Bradby (Oxford University Press) ; also *Charlotte Brontë*, by E. F. Benson (Longmans).

MRS. GASKELL : John Murray publishes various editions of Mrs. Gaskell's novels, including the Knutsford Edition (illustrated).

GEORGE ELIOT : Messrs. W. Blackwood & Son publish various editions of the works of George Eliot, also the *Life of George Eliot*, by J. W. Cross. A new biography and study by Gerald Bullett and *George Eliot : Her Mind and Her Art*, by Joan Bennett, are valuable contributions.

GEORGE WHYTE-MELVILLE : *The Gladiators* : Everyman's Library. *The Interpreter* and *The Queen's Maries* : Collins's Pocket Classics.

CHARLOTTE M. YONGE : Most of Charlotte M. Yonge's stories are published by Messrs. Macmillan. *The Heir of Redclyffe* appears in Collins's Pocket Classics ; *The Dove in the Eagle's Nest* in Everyman's Library.

MRS. J. H. EWING : The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge publish Mrs. Ewing's works in a Uniform Library Edition, the volumes being sold separately.

MRS. OLIPHANT : Some of Mrs. Oliphant's novels are published by John Murray and Chatto & Windus ; *Salem Chapel* is in Everyman's.

MARK RUTHERFORD : His novels are published by the Oxford University Press in a cheap edition.

In addition to the above, certain works of Disraeli, Reade, Kingsley, the Brontës, George Eliot, Charlotte Yonge, and Mrs. Oliphant are published in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

## THE NEW ENGLAND WRITERS

AFTER the death of Bunyan, the Puritan spirit found no considerable expression in English literature for nearly a century and a half. In England the seventeenth century was a religious century, and the eighteenth eminently irreligious. Apart from the writings of John Wesley, who, although not a Calvinist, was a Puritan in so far as Puritanism may be defined as "spiritual individualism," there was nothing that can be called Puritan literature produced in eighteenth-century England, and the Puritan spirit cannot be said to have again inspired literature until the appearance of the American Puritan writers of the nineteenth century.

New England was colonised by Puritan exiles from England, and though the strict letter of Calvinist theology may have been abandoned, the influence of the Puritan spirit not only continued a hundred years ago, but continues to-day, and has spread westward from New England to the Pacific coast. One of the earliest considerable writers in America was John Woolman, the Quaker (1720-1772) whose *Journal* embodies the Puritan spirit, and is a model of style. Nor must Tom Paine (1737-1809) be forgotten, though he belongs as much to England, where he was born, and to France. His *Common Sense*, *The Rights of Man*, and *The Age of Reason* stand among the great freedom books of the world. There is no trace of Puritanism in the two supremely great nineteenth-century American writers—Edgar Allan Poe and Walt Whitman. But Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the other transcendentalists, Longfellow, Whittier, and Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, may be all accurately described as Puritan writers.

## § I

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born in Boston in 1803. He entered Harvard in 1817, earning his living while he was a student as a waiter and in other such humble tasks, a common practice in American universities. In 1828 he was ordained as a minister and appointed chaplain of the Massachusetts Senate. After three years he resigned his pastorate owing to the loss of his orthodox faith, and paid his first visit to England, where he met Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Carlyle. He published his first book, *Nature*,



in 1836. In the next year he wrote his famous essay, *The American Scholar*. A volume of essays was published in 1841, and another in 1844. He was in England again in 1847 and 1848, and this last visit gave him his materials for his *English Traits*, which was published in 1856, six years after the publication of *Representative Men*. *The Conduct of Life* was published in 1860. Emerson died in 1882.

Emerson has been described as "the most shining intellectual glory and the most potent intellectual force of a continent." The transcendentalists, the small intellectual Boston coterie that was formed in 1836, and of which Emerson and Thoreau were the two most distinguished members, was a revolt against Calvinistic theology and a stimulus to philanthropy, which led to the national movement for the abolition of slavery. The transcendentalists indulged in many extravagancies, in which, however, Emerson had no part. He was always eminently sane and moderate. It was a long time, indeed, before he became an abolitionist, and it was not until 1856 that he declared: "I think we must get rid of slavery or we must get rid of freedom." When the Civil War began, however, he became an enthusiastic supporter of Lincoln and his policy. He was a man of many limitations. It has been said of him that he loved man, but that he was not fond of men. He was a considerable poet as well as an essayist, and he loved the poetry of Shakespeare, Dante, George Herbert, and Coleridge. But Shelley said nothing to him. He seldom read novels, and was bored by Cervantes, Scott, Jane Austen, and Dickens.

Despite his intellectual affinity with many English writers, despite his close association with Carlyle and others of his English contemporaries, Emerson was essentially an American and, for all his heterodoxy, an American Puritan, holding the belief expressed by that other American, Jonathan Edwards, when he said: "God, and real existence are the same. God is and there is none else."

The present generation is apt to regard Emerson as a teacher in the clouds, a transcendentalist too far from earth. But there is infinite wisdom in his packed sentences and often an astonishing beauty of expression—he is always suggestive, always inspiring.

As an example both of Emerson's philosophy and the brilliant style of his writing, the following extract may be quoted from the essay on "Self-Reliance";

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating



in all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny ; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort, and advancing on Chaos and the Dark. . . .

Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world. . . .

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said to-day. "Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood." Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood ? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood. . . .

I hope in these days we have heard the last of conformity and consistency. Let the words be gazetted and ridiculous henceforward. Instead of the gong for dinner, let us hear a whistle from the Spartan fife. Let us never bow and apologise more. A great man is coming to eat at my house. I do not wish to please him ; I wish that he should wish to please me. I will stand here for humanity, and though I would make it kind, I would make it true. Let us affront and reprimand the smooth mediocrity and squalid contentment of the times, and hurl in the face of custom, and trade, and office the fact which is the upshot of all history, that there is a great responsible Thinker and Actor working wherever a man works ; that a true man belongs to no other time or place, but is the centre of things. Where he is, there is nature. He measures you, and all men, and all events.

Emerson was a happy, cheerful man, enjoying the love and popularity that were given to him in no stinted measure. Carlyle once said "It's a very striking and curious spectacle to behold a man in these days so confidently cheerful as Emerson." But Emerson was compared by Matthew Arnold with Marcus Aurelius ; and to a man akin to the great emperor-philosopher the way of virtue could never seem easy and the road to life must always be hard and narrow. Emerson once said, here echoing Carlyle : "It is in vain to make a paradise but for good men," and in one of his poems he writes :

Though love repine and reason chafe,  
There came a voice without reply :—  
'Tis man's perdition to be safe,  
When for the truth he ought to die.

He finished his life as tranquilly and as cheerfully as he had lived it,



and it is interesting to compare Henley's fierce and, for all its emphasis, half-doubting assertion :

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate :  
I am the captain of my soul,

with Emerson's :

I trim myself to the storm of time,  
I man the rudder, reef the sail,  
Obey the voice at eve obeyed at prime :  
Lowly faithful, banish fear,  
Right onward drive unharmed :  
The port, well worth the cruise, is near,  
And every wave is charmed.

Emerson's *English Traits* is, for English readers, the most interesting thing that he ever wrote. It is witty, as for instance when he says : "The Frenchman invented the ruffle, the Englishman added the shirt." It is instinct with observation, as for instance when he asserts that "the English are a nation of humorists," a fact which the rest of Europe has discovered only within the twentieth century.

Malvolio's words, in *Twelfth Night*, "I think nobly of the soul," is almost a summary of Ralph Waldo Emerson's attitude to the mysteries of life. He thought nobly of the soul ; but with opinions, with answers to questions, with debating-society propositions and conclusions, he had little to do. He once said, "I do not wish for disciples." In a sense he has none, for he gave out no body of doctrine for the many ; he galvanised the individual. As Richard Garnett wrote in his admirable little *Life* : "More than any other of the great writers of the age, he is a Voice. He is almost impersonal. He is pure from the taint of sect, clique, or party. He does not argue, but announces." And, as he did not know, he does not tell us what the soul is. He says :

What we commonly call man, the eating, drinking, planting, counting man, does not, as we know him, represent himself, but misrepresents himself. Him we do not respect, but the soul, whose organ he is, would he let it appear through his action, would make our knees bend. When it breathes through his intellect it is genius ; when it breathes through his will it is virtue ; when it flows through his affection it is love. . . . All reform aims, in some one particular, to let the soul have its way through us ; in other words to engage us to obey.

He flashed out these things because he believed them in his depths : but he announced, he did not argue. He held that the scholar of life is a

dispassionate reporter, not a partisan, and that if his report to himself seems true he can but accept it. "To him no disputes can attach, he is invulnerable. The vulgar think he would found a sect and be installed and made much of. He knows better, and much prefers his melons and his woods."

Emerson believed that the soul is our best pulpit—above all our real link with God. "Ineffable is the union of man and God in every act of the soul. The simplest person, who in his integrity worships God, becomes God. . . . How dear, how soothing to man, arises the idea of God, peopling the lonely place, effacing the scars of our mistakes and disappointments. . . . Revering the soul, and learning, as the ancient said, that 'its beauty is immense,' man . . . will weave no longer a spotted life of shreds and patches, but he will live with a divine unity." Thus did Emerson turn from doctrine and programme and formal beliefs to the inner life, reached in solitude, and in the presence of Nature, where the soul, he believed, found "the music and pictures of the most ancient religion."

## § 2

Nathaniel Hawthorne was the descendant of a Wiltshire family who crossed the Atlantic in 1630. Hawthorne was born in the year 1804. While he was a schoolboy he wrote to his mother: "I do not want to be a doctor and live by men's diseases, nor a minister to live by their sins, nor a lawyer and live by their quarrels. So I don't see that there is anything left for me but to be an author." Authorship did not prove particularly profitable, and like many another man of letters Hawthorne earned his living in political appointments until the publication of his famous *The Scarlet Letter*, when he was forty-six. *The House of the Seven Gables* was published in 1851, *The Wonder Book* in the same year, *The Blythedale Romance* in 1852, and *The Marble Faun* in 1860. Hawthorne died in 1864. In *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne describes fairly and without extenuation or exaggeration the spirit of the Puritans, who, demanding liberty for themselves, were the keenest persecutors of those that disagreed with them. While to the Catholic Church there are seven deadly sins, to the Puritan there is only one. The hero and the heroine of *The Scarlet Letter* have committed the one outrage against the moral law which the Puritan cannot forgive. The woman pays directly, the man indirectly and secretly. But Hawthorne is insistent that both have sinned, that both are the victims of their sin, and that both must win freedom through punishment. Although in *The Scarlet Letter* there is a suggestion of the modern idea of each individual's right to happiness, the general tendency of the author with all his criticism of the persecutors is to adopt the attitude dictated by the Puritanism in his veins.



*The House of the Seven Gables* is a rather gloomy story, emphasising the awful doctrine that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children. *The Marble Faun*, written after Hawthorne had spent some time in Europe, is concerned, as has been well said by W. T. Brent and John Erskine, with the possible good that sometimes comes out of evil, "a fitting theme for the last work of one who all his life had brooded more than most Puritans on the intricate relations of good and evil."

Richard Henry Stoddard has said of Hawthorne :

"He inherited the gravity of his Puritan ancestors without their superstition, and learned in his solitary meditations a knowledge of the night side of life which would have filled them with suspicion. A profound anatomist of the heart, he was singularly free from morbidness, and in his darkest speculations concerning evil was robustly right-minded. He worshipped conscience with his intellectual as well as his moral nature ; it is supreme in all he wrote. Besides these mental traits, he possessed the literary quality of style—a grace, a charm, a perfection of language which no other American writer ever possessed in the same degree, and which places him among the great masters of English prose."

### § 3

The most famous of the American Puritan poets is Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. His popularity amongst simple folk has been won by the moral fervour, essentially Puritan in its form, of such poems as *The Village Blacksmith*, *Excelsior*, and *A Psalm of Life*. Probably no verses are better known than Longfellow's :

Lives of great men all remind us  
 We can make our lives sublime,  
 And, departing, leave behind us  
 Footprints on the sands of time.  
 Footprints, that perhaps another,  
 Sailing o'er life's solemn main,  
 A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
 Seeing shall take heart again.  
 Let us, then, be up and doing,  
 With a heart for any fate ;  
 Still achieving, still pursuing,  
 Learn to labour and to wait.

Longfellow was born at Portland, Maine, in February 1807. He was at college with Hawthorne, and after he had graduated he went to Europe for three years, studying in Germany, France, Spain, and Italy. After another trip to Europe in 1835, during which his first wife died in Holland,

he was appointed a professor at Harvard, where he held a chair for eighteen years. Longfellow died in 1882. He was a simple gentle-hearted man, profoundly affected by German sentimentality. His life was easy and uneventful, its only outstanding event being the tragic death of his second wife by burning. Longfellow would not have attached any meaning (it probably has none) to the phrase, "art for art's sake." He believed as fully as H. G. Wells that literature was a means to an end, the end in his case being the inculcation of Puritan morality. He was nearly always didactic, nearly always sentimental, sometimes a little silly. But though his poetry may not be of the greatest, his faith was steady and unquestioning :

There is no Death ! What seems so is transition ;  
 This life of mortal breath  
 Is but a suburb of the life elysian,  
 Whose portal we call Death.

*Evangeline*, published in 1847, gave Longfellow an unchallengeable place among the writers in his own country. *The Golden Legend*, published in 1851, founded on a German poem, is perhaps his most considerable achievement ; and *Hiawatha*, with its drama, its humour, and its novel versification, is at least facile and interesting folk-lore. In the later years of his life Longfellow made one of the best English translations of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Longfellow as a poet was handicapped by his limitation of experience and to some extent by his facility. He wrote too easily, but sometimes he wrote admirably well, as in the two famous lines :

I heard the trailing garments of the night  
 Sweep through her marble halls.

Longfellow has been a great "awakener" of the love of poetry in the young. He has been the genial and inspiring doorkeeper of the temple. His easy and satisfying rhythm, his rich yet simple suggestions of things venerable and picturesque, and a certain unction in all he wrote, combine to make his works the very tuck-shop of poetry for young readers. Which of us does not remember with gratitude and recovered joy the moments when he first read these lines ?—

In the ancient town of Bruges,  
 In the quaint old Flemish city,  
 As the evening shades descended,  
 Low and loud and sweetly blended,  
 Low at times and loud at times,  
 And changing like a poet's rhymes,  
 Rang the beautiful wild chimes  
 From the Belfry in the market  
 Of the ancient town of Bruges.

These lines give to a young dreamer just his own kind of thought, his own



kind of mood, and as much magical expression as he needs or can receive. Gently they kindled our imagination, sweetly they confirmed our deepening vision of the world. But Longfellow has lines for many other moods of the young. How our souls were stirred to read :

And King Olaf heard the cry,  
Saw the red light in the sky,  
Laid his hand upon his sword,  
As he leaned upon the railing,  
And his ships went sailing, sailing,  
Northward into Drontheim fiord.

There he stood as one who dreamed ;  
And the red light glanced and gleamed  
On the armour that he wore ;  
And he shouted, as the rifted  
Streamers o'er him shook and shifted,  
" I accept thy challenge, Thor ! "

Norway never yet had seen  
One so beautiful of mien,  
One so royal in attire.  
When in arms completely furnished  
Harness gold-inlaid and burnished,  
Mantle like a flame of fire.

Thus came Olaf to his own,  
When upon the night-wind blown  
Passed that cry along the shore ;  
And he answered, while the rifted  
Streamers o'er him shook and shifted,  
" I accept thy challenge, Thor ! "

Who, in mature years, has not repeated, with a sadder accent than of old, those simple words in another poem :

I stood on the bridge at midnight,  
As the clocks were striking the hour,  
And the moon rose over the city,  
Behind the dark church-tower.

How often, O how often,  
In the days that had gone by,  
I had stood on that bridge at midnight  
And gazed on that wave and sky !

How often, O how often,  
I had wished that the ebbing tide  
Would bear me away on its bosom  
O'er the ocean wild and wide.

## § 4

Poe holds a curious and individual place in literature. He was the pioneer of the detective story, he made unrelieved horror a theme for art, and he wrote a few poems that, in spite of imperfections, will live. An American, mingling in the social and literary life of American cities, he yet seemed to have no country save that created by his gloomy and restricted imagination.

Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 18, 1809. His parents were actors. His mother was Elizabeth Arnold, who appears to have been a creditable actress and altogether of finer quality than her husband, who abandoned her at Richmond, Virginia. Her three children were adopted by sympathetic folk, Edgar being taken into the household of John Allan, a wealthy tobacco merchant. He was then two years old.

He was in England with the Allans from 1815 to 1820, and was sent to the Manor House School, Stoke Newington, of which he has left an account (highly coloured and at the same time somewhat shadowy) in *William Wilson*. At seventeen he entered the University of Virginia, where he acquired a considerable knowledge of the classics and a taste for gambling. Allan, already sorely tried by Poe's extravagance, refused to pay his gambling debts, whereupon the delinquent vanished to Boston. Later, after reconciliation with his guardian, he went to the West Point Military Academy. No man could have been less fitted for military duties and discipline than Poe. He so assiduously neglected his work that he was "sent down," with a taste for brandy and mathematics. At West Point he wrote some of the verse which, after many revisions, appears in the slim volume of his poetry. The final break with Allan came when that most generous and foolish person remarried soon after the death of his first wife. The new mistress of the household did not approve of Poe, and rejected him as a nuisance—which he probably was.

John Allan came into an inheritance, and immediately began to furnish his home lavishly. He bought books, pictures, costly draperies, and busts; and it has been suggested that this sudden change in his surroundings probably accounts for many of Poe's sumptuous poetical backgrounds. The atmosphere of *The Raven* is heavy with interior luxury:

But the Raven still beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,  
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird and bust and door.  
Then upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking  
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—  
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore  
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."



Thus I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing  
 To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core ;  
 This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining  
 On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamplight gloated o'er  
 But whose velvet violet lining with the lamplight gloating o'er,  
     *She shall press, ah, nevermore !*

The most salient point in Poe's personal history is his marriage to his cousin, Virginia, the daughter of his father's sister, Maria Clemm. "I was a child and *she* was a child," as he says in *Annabel Lee*.

There is a Poe legend, invented by the base journalism of his time, which still survives in spite of the work of honest biographers. He was, according to the legend, a dipsomaniac and a drug-fiend. He was neither the one nor the other. There were times when he abandoned himself to alcohol, and after the death of Virginia his self-control in that direction became weaker. There is little or no evidence that he took opium habitually.

Poe, as a story-teller, possessed two styles, entirely different from each other. In the first his aim was to create a clammy atmosphere of illusion, in which one breathes heavily as in a fog laden with miasmatic exhalations—in a region of desolation, death, the fear of impending calamity, impalpable horror that yet must create for itself some kind of form. *The Fall of the House of Usher*, his best tale in this manner, is a rhapsody of terror, which grips one like a nightmare. Nothing can surpass the skill with which, little by little, an atmosphere of horror is created, until the reader is ready to thrill through every nerve—and *then* the sound of the footsteps of the lady, buried alive and re-arisen, heard outside the door ! It is a scene of horror incarnate, unexcelled.

Poe's second manner is that of the strictest realism, applied in many ways, but most successfully, perhaps, in the detective story. Dupin, whom Sherlock Holmes acknowledged as his master, was one of the most original of the great characters in fiction. The plots of these stories are also the most ingenious that have ever been constructed—such as that of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, in which the murderer is a monkey, and that of *The Purloined Letter*, which is "concealed" by being placed conspicuously in the letter-rack. The minute accumulated details which make the most fantastic stories seem like actual life, as in *The Pit and the Pendulum*, where the reader almost seems to feel the mighty swinging blade descending over his own bound body ; in *The Descent into the Maelstrom*, in which he sits within the cockle-boat as the gigantic whirlpool sucks it down ; above all, in *Arthur Gordon Pym*, his only long complete romance, the narrative of the adventures of the *Grampus* on her voyage to the South Pole, with mutiny, wreck, and massacre—all these things are made as living as the scenes of Gulliver or Crusoe. *The Cask of Amontillado*, one of his shortest



stories, is also one of the best. It is the tale of a man who lures his enemy into a cellar to taste a draught of Amontillado. There he fetters him in a recess, and proceeds to wall him up. This is how the story ends.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was *not* the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated—I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall. I replied to the yells of him who clamoured. I re-echoed—I aided—I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamourer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognising as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said—

“Ha! ha! ha!—he! he!—a very good joke indeed—an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo—he! he! he!—over our wine—he! he! he!”

“The Amontillado!” I said.

“He! he! he!—he! he! he!—yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone.”

“Yes,” I said, “let us be gone.”

“For the love of God, Montressor!”

“Yes,” I said, “for the love of God!”

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud—

“Fortunato!”

No answer. I called again—

“Fortunato!”

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick—on account of the dampness of the catacombs. I hastened to make an end of my labour. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up.



Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat !*

As a poet he had still finer accomplishments. In poetry the wildernesses and deserts of his dreams blossomed into a vague beauty—an indefiniteness that had form, an obscurity lit by occasional and intelligible splendours. *The Raven* epitomises, in sensuous and haunting metre, his predominant mood of shadow and gloom. *The Bells* is a brilliant metrical experiment. His best work, however, is in neither of his two most familiar poems, but scattered through many poems, like gems glowing with inner light. The most perfect complete poem is probably *To Helen*.

Helen, thy beauty is to me  
Like those Nicean barks of yore,  
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,  
The weary, way-worn wanderer bore  
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,  
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,  
Thy naiad airs have brought me home  
To the glory that was Greece  
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo ! in yon brilliant window-niche  
How statue-like I see thee stand !  
The agate lamp within thy hand,  
Ah ! Psyche, from the regions which  
Are Holy Land !

The fantastic bordering on madness finds a voice in *The Haunted Palace* and *The Conqueror Worm*. In *Dream-Land* Poe achieved the almost impossible :

By a route obscure and lonely,  
Haunted by ill angels only,  
Where an Eidolon named Night,  
On a black throne reigns upright,  
I have reached these lands but newly  
From an ultimate dim Thule—  
From a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime,  
Out of Space—out of Time.

Bottomless vales and boundless floods,  
And chasms, and caves, and Titan woods,  
With forms that no man can discover  
For the dews that drip all over ;  
Mountains toppling evermore  
Into seas without a shore ;  
Seas that restlessly aspire,  
Surging, unto skies of fire ;

Lakes that endlessly outspread  
 Their lone waters—lone and dead,—  
 Their still waters—still and chilly  
 With the snows of the lolling lily,  
 By the lakes that thus outspread  
 Their lone waters, lone and dead,—  
 Their sad waters, sad and chilly  
 With the snows of the lolling lily,—  
 By the mountains—near the river  
 Murmuring lowly, murmuring ever,—  
 By the gray woods—by the swamp  
 Where the toad and the newt encamp,—  
 By the dismal tarns and pools  
 Where dwell the Ghouls,—  
 By each spot the most unholy—  
 In each nook most melancholy,—  
 There the traveller meets aghast  
 Sheeted Memories of the Past—  
 Shrouded forms that start and sigh  
 As they pass the wanderer by—  
 White-robed forms of friends long given,  
 In agony, to the Earth—and Heaven. . . .

There never has been, and never will be, a satisfactory definition of poetry, because poetry is a house of many mansions. According to Poe's definition in his suggestive essay on *The Poetic Principle*, poetry is the "rhythmical creation of beauty."

Often does he convey an impression of sheer loveliness in words :

And all my days are trances,  
 And all my nightly dreams  
 Are where thy dark eye glances,  
 And where thy footstep gleams—  
 In what ethereal dances,  
 By what eternal streams.

Poe died at Baltimore on October 7, 1849. What precisely happened during the last three or four days of his life remains obscure. The generally accepted story is that, being detained in Baltimore by accident, he drank too freely. This was on the eve of a municipal election, and he was found wandering about the streets by the abominable agents of a political club. They detained him for the night, and the next morning he was drugged and made to vote in eleven different wards. Then he was abandoned ; recognised by an acquaintance as he lay on a bench ; and taken to the Washington University Hospital. The doctor who attended him there stated—five-and-twenty years after Poe's death—that there was no trace



of alcohol or drugs about him. Always mysterious, it was Poe's fate to die mysteriously.

No less mysterious was the death in 1913 of Ambrose Bierce, who, in his tales of mystery, owed something to Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*. Even in these stories, however, Bierce owed much more to his own original genius. In *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*, he mingled Poe-like mysteries with admirable stories based on his experiences as a soldier in the Civil War, experiences which more directly informed his Battle Pieces—these, perhaps the finest battle narratives ever written in English, have been edited by the late A. J. A. Symons and published in England by the First Edition Club. *Can Such Things Be?* consists wholly of stories concerning the mysterious in general and the supernatural in particular: and they fall only a very little short of Poe's stories in the same vein. Bierce was also a master of the effective epigram and the trenchant apophthegm (see *The Devil's Word-Book*). As a fiery satirist and a vigorous, caustic journalist, he went close to dominating American ephemerides throughout the long period, 1885–1910; in the first decade of our century, he was acclaimed as the G.O.M. of American journalism. But in whatever literary genre he practised, he is not for weak stomachs.

## § 5

Writing in 1855, Emerson described Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* as "the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed." That is as true to-day as it was nearly seventy years ago.

Walt Whitman was born on Long Island, New York, in 1819, the second son of a family of nine. His father was a farmer and carpenter. His ancestry was partly English and partly Dutch, and his forbears were either farmers or sailors. His only inheritance was the love of the sea and the open air. Early in his life Whitman's family moved to Brooklyn, and he began to earn his living as an errand-boy, afterwards becoming a printer, a teacher, and a journalist. He was for a while on the staff of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, and then he went south to write for the *New Orleans Crescent*. In 1851 he was back again in Brooklyn, buying and selling small houses and writing magazine articles and novels of no great merit. The first edition of his poems *Leaves of Grass* was published in the summer of 1855. For reasons which none of his biographers have adequately explained, Whitman did not serve in the Civil War. He worked, however, as a volunteer nurse in the military hospitals in Washington, an experience that led to the writing of the series of war poems which he called *Drum-Taps* and which are now always incorporated with *Leaves of Grass*. After the war he stayed for some years in Washington, having obtained a position

in the Government service. He had a paralytic stroke in 1873 and removed to Camden, New Jersey, where he remained until his death in 1892. He published two prose volumes—*Democratic Vistas* in 1871 and *Specimen Days in America* in 1882. Whitman never married. John Burroughs says that his life “was a poet’s life from first to last—free, unworldly, unhurried, unconventional, unselfish, and was contentedly and joyously lived.”

In all literature, no poet has ever more persistently sung himself. There is almost blatant self-revelation in every line that Whitman wrote. He compels recognition of his own individuality. “I am Walt Whitman, liberal and lusty as Nature.” He says of his poems :

Camerado, this is no book ;  
Who touches this, touches a man.

Born in the Puritanic finicky pre-Civil War America, Whitman was almost outrageously masculine. He was a large man shouting at the world. His personal appearance in his middle life has been described by a contemporary : “He was quite six feet in height, with the frame of a gladiator, a flowing grey beard mingled with the hairs on his broad, slightly bared chest. In his well-laundried checked shirt-sleeves, with trousers frequently pushed into his boot-legs, his fine head covered with an immense slouched black or light felt hat, he would walk about with a naturally majestic stride, a massive model of ease and independence.”

Whitman is the poet of democracy. He loved himself, but he loved himself because he loved life—not delicate, refined life but the life of sweat and energy. “Muscle and pluck for ever” was one of his slogans. Loving himself and loving life, he also loved his fellows with an abounding enthusiasm that no other poet has ever equalled. Like St. Francis, his love included all the creatures of the earth, and he shouted the Christian gospel that only by love can the world be saved.

### FOR YOU, O DEMOCRACY

Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,  
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,  
I will make divine magnetic lands,  
    With the love of comrades,  
    With the lifelong love of comrades.

I will paint companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America, and along  
    the shores of the great lakes, and all over the prairies,  
I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other’s necks,  
    By the love of comrades.  
    By the manly love of comrades,  
For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you, ma femme !  
For you, for you I am trilling these songs.





*Reproduced by courtesy of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge*

SCENE FROM "JANE EYRE"

WATER-COLOUR BY FREDERICK WALKER

As an illustration to Charlotte Brontë's great novel, the artist has chosen the dramatic moment of the visit to the mad woman after the interrupted marriage of Jane to Mr. Rochester.



*Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the Tate Gallery*

EDITH SITWELL

BY ALVARO GUEVARA

This portrait was painted in the 1920's when Edith Sitwell was, besides her own poetry, encouraging new ways of modern writing in her annual anthologies, *Wheels*. The artist has wonderfully caught the heightened and almost fierce colour of this poetry. Dr. Sitwell's critical writings on other poets, her own creative work, her careful propaganda, have served English literature, in their reaction from what she once called "village idiocy in poetry."



To Whitman friendship was the "base of all metaphysics."

Yet underneath Socrates I clearly see, and underneath Christ the divine I see,  
The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of friend to friend.

The man concerned most with the good government of his parish is always the best citizen of his country. Only the reasonable patriot can ever be a useful cosmopolitan. We must begin at the beginning. So Whitman suggests that the Socialist must be at the same time an individualist—respect for the mass being dependent on respect for the individual.

Each man to himself and each woman to herself is the word of the past and present, and the true word of immortality ;  
No one can acquire for another—not one ;  
No one can grow for another—not one.

His immense egoism, coupled with his appreciation of fraternity, compels him to claim kinship with all that is best and finest—even with Our Lord.

I do not sound your name, but I understand you,  
I specify you with joy, O my comrade, to salute you, and to salute those that are with you, before and since, and those to come also,  
That we all labour together transmitting *the same charge and succession*.

Whitman's joy in the life of man is not confined to the mind and the spirit. In the set of poems that he calls *Children of Adam* he acclaims the pleasures of the body with a frank heartiness that shocked the delicate-minded New England of his day and caused Oliver Wendell Holmes to declare : "The poets coquette with Nature and weave garlands of roses for her ; but Whitman goes at her like a great hirsute man—no, it won't do." But with all his boldly expressed joy in the flesh, Whitman has nothing in common with the decadents who gloat over nastiness. Every normal human experience seemed to him to have beauty and dignity, and in everything he wrote there is the clean open air—the simplicity of sincerity, the refusal to recognise evil. Whitman is never stuffy, never "suggestive."

If anything is sacred, the human body is sacred,  
And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of manhood untainted,  
And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred body is more beautiful than the most beautiful face.

And beauty to him is not dependent on youth and passion.

Women sit or move to and fro, some old, some young ;  
The young are beautiful—but the old are more beautiful than the young.

When America started on the race for wealth that began after the Civil War, Whitman became a splendid figure of protest, the apostle of anti-greed. He was vehemently American, but his was not a narrow

nationalism. "I salute all the inhabitants of the earth," he says in one of his poems, and, writing of the triumphant voyage of American democracy, he adds :

Venerable, priestly Asia sails this day with thee,  
And royal, feudal Europe sails with thee.

Whitman was certainly an unequal poet. He paid for being entirely undisciplined. He hated restraint and cared nothing for the rules of verse-writing. Sometimes he is flat, sometimes he is turgid, sometimes he is ridiculous. His long catalogues of names are wearisome and as far removed from poetry as the verse of Dr. Watts. No poet is easier to parody.

But at his best Whitman found exactly the right way of saying what he had to say. There is, as W. M. Rossetti said, "a deep and majestic rhythmical sense" in his famous dirge for President Lincoln, *When lilacs last in the door-yard bloomed*.

Come, lovely and soothing Death,  
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,  
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,  
Sooner or later, delicate Death.

Praised be the fathomless Universe,  
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,  
And for love, sweet love. But praise ! O praise—praise !  
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding Death.  
Dark Mother always gliding near, with soft feet,  
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome ?  
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,  
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfalteringly.

The night in silence under many a star,  
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I know,  
And the soul turning to thee, O vast and well-veil'd Death,  
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.

Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,  
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and the prairies wide,  
Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves and ways,  
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee, O Death.

And how tenderly is the farewell expressed in *O Captain ! my Captain !*

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,  
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will ;  
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,  
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won ;

Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells !

But I with mournful tread,

Walk the deck my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.



## § 6

John Greenleaf Whittier was born in Massachusetts in the same year as Longfellow, 1807. The early circumstances, however, of the two poets were vastly different. Longfellow's family was well-to-do. Whittier was the son of a small Quaker farmer, too poor to give his children much schooling, but fortunate in being able to endow them with courage, piety, and the love of simplicity. Whittier was brought up on Burns and the Bible. While he was a boy he began to write verses, some of which were printed in a paper edited by William Lloyd Garrison, the famous anti-slavery leader. In order to pay for some sort of education, Whittier learned to make shoes, working his way through college as many another American boy has done, by his own energy and hard work. Elected to the Massachusetts Legislature in 1835, he became a year later secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society. Longfellow gently disapproved of slavery, but his was not the temperament for politics and strife.

With his verse and his prose Whittier did perhaps more than any other writer, with the exception of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, to arouse the conscience of the North against the existence of slavery within the boundaries of the United States. After the Civil War was fought and won, Whittier characteristically devoted himself to the appeasement of passion, and to the creation of a new fraternity between North and South. He died in 1892.

His poems, like those of Longfellow, have a perennial fascination for the schoolroom and the drawing-room reciter. Which of us has not learned *Barbara Frietchie* by heart? He was a prolific writer, always working with a moral purpose, limited in education and in experience, lacking intellectual power, imagination, and artistic judgment. But he was tremendously sincere and tremendously earnest. Critical opinion agrees that his one really great poem is *Ichabod* which he wrote when Daniel Webster, the famous American orator, had betrayed the hopes of the anti-slavery party. *Ichabod* is magnificent invective and is worth reproducing in full :

So fallen ! so lost ! the light withdrawn  
Which once he wore !  
The glory from his grey hairs gone  
For evermore.

Reville him not,—the Tempter hath  
A snare for all ;  
And pitying tears, not scorn and wrath,  
Befit his fall !

## THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

Oh, dumb be passion's stormy rage  
When he who might  
Have lighted up and led his age  
Falls back in night.

Scorn ! would the angels laugh, to mark  
A bright soul driven,  
Fiend-goaded, down the endless dark,  
From hope and heaven !

Let not the land once proud of him  
Insult him now,  
Nor brand with deeper shame his dim,  
Dishonoured brow.

But let its humbled sons, instead,  
From sea to lake,  
A long lament, as for the dead,  
In sadness make.

Of all we love and honoured, naught  
Save power remains,—  
A fallen angel's pride of thought,  
Still strong in chains.

All else is gone ; from those great eyes  
The soul has fled :  
When faith is lost, when honour dies,  
The man is dead !

Then, pay the reverence of old days  
To his dead fame ;  
Walk backward, with averted gaze,  
And hide the shame !

Many of Whittier's passionate pleas for the liberty of man, especially of the black man, belonged less to poetry than to an exalted type of journalism. His songs of freedom were often written in haste, and, with equal haste, were printed as broadsides, or upon cards, or were read at anti-slavery meetings, or were sent to newspapers. They were written to strike the iron while it was hot, and to enforce an ideal as the vision of it grew in the common mind. They were trumpet-calls to action. Whatever their artistic defects may be, the heart can still beat double to the march and meaning of lines like these :

The voice of Massachusetts ! Of her free sons and daughters,—  
Deep calling unto deep aloud,—the sound of many waters !  
Against the burden of that voice what tyrant power shall stand  
*No fetters in the Bay State ! No slave upon her land !*



We wage no war,—we lift no arm,—we fling no torch within  
 The fire-damps of the quaking mine beneath your soil of sin ;  
 We leave ye with your bondmen, to wrestle, while ye can,  
 With the strong upward tendencies and god-like soul of man !

## § 7

Harriet Beecher Stowe was born in 1811. She was the sixth child of Lyman Beecher, a well-known Connecticut Congregational minister, and the father of a far better known minister Henry Ward Beecher. Harriet was a precocious child. When she was eleven she wrote an essay answering the question, "Can the immortality of the soul be proved by the light of Nature?" and she followed this essay with a poetic drama. She was "converted" when she was fourteen, subsequently and, in the circumstances, naturally suffering from religious melancholy.

In 1832 Dr. Beecher and his family removed to Cincinnati, a city on the border-line between the North and the South of the United States. Living in Cincinnati, Harriet Beecher saw for herself the condition of the slaves, though in Kentucky, the nearest slave state to Cincinnati, a very mild paternal form of slavery existed, as the readers of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* will remember. Harriet married the Reverend Calvin Stowe in 1836, and fifteen years later she began to write her famous story. It is interesting to know that she wrote the conclusion, the death of Uncle Tom, first, and before she wrote any more read the chapter to her own children, being encouraged to go on from the fact that they wept bitterly. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was not a great success as a serial, and Mrs. Beecher Stowe sold the serial rights for about seventy pounds. Publication in book form, however, gave her immediate fame, made her, indeed, one of the most famous authors who ever lived. It is not necessary here to consider in detail a book which almost every English-speaking man, woman, and child has read, and which has been translated into practically every language spoken by man. No less a writer than George Sand, who reviewed *Uncle Tom's Cabin* when it first appeared, warmly praised its sincerity and strength. Women as different as Harriet Martineau and Queen Victoria were among Mrs. Stowe's admirers. She lived until 1896. Like Whittier, after the Civil War, she helped in the good work of reconciliation. She wrote several other novels, but all of them are forgotten.

The world remembers nothing else about Harriet Beecher Stowe than that she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and as Professor Trent has said, "a book that stirs the world and is instrumental in bringing on a Civil War and freeing the enslaved race, may well elicit the admiration of a more sophisticated generation." In her moral fervour, in her evangelical

faith, and in her courage, Mrs. Stowe certainly stands by right among the great Puritan writers.

Two other American writers, Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894) and James Russell Lowell (1819-1891), belonged to the New England school of Whittier and Longfellow, but in their writings the Puritan spirit is less apparent. Lowell was cosmopolitan in his culture, a poet, and the first and, in some respects, the most distinguished of American literary critics. But his most permanent contribution to literature is the *Biglow Papers* (1848). Similarly Holmes, a poet of distinction and a novelist of parts, has a place in literary history mainly as the author of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table* (1857).

## § 8

In Henry David Thoreau, who was born at Concord, Massachusetts, in 1817, we have a country writer very different from Gilbert White on the one hand and Izaak Walton on the other. Although much of his writing is concerned with the ways and doings of animals and plants, and with country sights and sounds generally, it is in his character of philosopher and witty commentator on human affairs that his title to fame consists. His is the gospel of sincerity, simplicity, and beauty. Of Puritan stock, and with strong Puritan instincts, he was, for all his cynical words, his Protestantism, and his unconventional habits of life, a true child of his forbears.

All his observations of country life, and of the world of nature generally, were keen and original; and he displayed towards all living things a respect, even a reverence, none too common among naturalists. He thought of them as fellow-creatures—nay, as fellow-spirits—and they knew no fear in his presence. When a sparrow alighted on his shoulder, he said that he was "more distinguished by that circumstance than by any epaulet he could have worn." The wood squirrels would nestle in his lap, and hares did not fly at his approach.

But, naturalist of a kind though he was, his main interest all the time remained the mind and soul of man, especially the mind and soul of Henry David Thoreau.

Even when he was a boy of seventeen Thoreau noted in his diary his sense of the importance of self-study and self-examination. Most people, he observed, instead of looking into their own minds, try to observe the workings of the minds of others, "who should merely be considered as different editions of the same great work." It would be foolish, he says, "to borrow a work which one possesses but has not perused."



Still, his love of the open air and of the life of nature was no affectation. Emerson, who called him "The Bachelor of Nature," says that Thoreau "knew the country like a fox or a bird, and passed through it as freely by paths of his own. His intimacy with animals suggested, what Thomas Fuller records of Butler, the apiologist, 'that either he had told the bees things, or the bees had told him.'"

It is by his two years' sojourn in the Walden woods, a mile from his native village, or rather by the remarkable book in which he recorded his doings and reflections during that sojourn, that Thoreau's name is best known. Much nonsense has been talked about this "return to primitive life," and many sentimentalists have imitated it, so far as externals are concerned. But Thoreau himself had no illusions about it. He says :

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach ; and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

And in the concluding chapter of *Walden* he writes :

I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one.

The last things he wanted were disciples and imitators. He even wished to avoid imitating himself.

It is remarkable how easy and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves. I had not lived at Walden a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond-side.

*Walden* is one of the great books of the world. It is unlike any other, less by reason of its point of view than of its quaintness of arrangement, Attic wit, and constant surprises. Thoreau's insistence on high and exacting ideals may sometimes suggest moral priggishness ; and perhaps his aloofness and contempt for easygoing folks afford some justification for this suspicion. But he was no humbug, and his practice was at least level with his precepts. His courage was unlimited, and there is no finer example of true nobility of character than is afforded by his public action when, amid general approval, John Brown the abolitionist was condemned to be executed.

He wrote in *Walden* :

The greater part of what my neighbours call good I believe in my soul to be bad, and if I repent of anything, it is very likely to be my good behaviour. You may say the wisest thing you can, old man. I hear an irresistible voice that invites me away from all that.

And what he thought, he did.

"A truly good book," he says elsewhere, "teaches me better than to read it. I must soon lay it down, and commence living on its hint. It is slipping out of my fingers while I read. . . . So I cannot stay to hear a good sermon, and applaud at the conclusion, but shall be half-way to Thermopylæ before that."

"It does not so much matter what kind of paper you drop into the ballot-box once a year, as what kind of man you drop from your chamber into the street every morning." That is perhaps the leading note of Thoreau's life and Thoreau's work. And we find it again in his lines, "Knowledge":

Men say they know many things,  
But lo! they have taken wings—  
The arts and sciences  
And a thousand appliances;  
The wind that blows  
Is all that anybody knows.

Apart from *Walden*, which was published in 1854, his best work is contained in a volume entitled *A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers* (1845); which incidentally includes what is perhaps the finest utterance on friendship in any literature.

## § 9

Humour has become one of the outstanding features in American literature, but it developed late. If we recall the conditions in which that literature came to birth, the fact is not surprising. The people of the English-speaking colonies were a hard-faring folk, engaged in a material struggle to establish the plantations and develop commerce on the sea. Whatever life they had time for, apart from their daily occupation, was sought in religion, which they practised dourly, and felt intensely. The history of American humour begins with the appearance of Washington Irving.

Irving's satirical extravaganza, *A History of New York, by Diedrich Knickerbocker*, was published in 1809. In it, the old Dutch settlers of Manhattan Island were good-naturedly yet brilliantly burlesqued. The humour of his picture of the ubiquitous little man in knee-breeches and cocked hat is irresistible. Much of the humour that came after Irving's had only a local audience, but his appeal was a wide one, for when Sir Walter Scott read the book "his sides were sore with laughing."

At the time of this success Irving was twenty-six, and the next ten years



were passed in distracting mercantile pursuits the end of which was his bankruptcy. *The Sketch Book*, issued in parts during 1819-1820, was the outcome of his resolve to devote his whole attention to literature. Its welcome quickly extended from the United States to Europe. Irving's humour had matured, acquiring a felicitous subtlety that was due to his cosmopolitan outlook and by no means typical of his countrymen. For example, when Rip Van Winkle returned to the village after his mountain-sleep of twenty years, the ruby face of King George on the inn-sign under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe was singularly metamorphosed. "The red hat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of a sceptre, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, GENERAL WASHINGTON." A little masterpiece is this story of Rip, a good-humoured, indolent sort of fellow who encounters a strange company playing at ninepins in the Kaatskill Mountains, and having tasted their liquor falls into his lengthy sleep. The underlying whimsicality of the narrative never detracts from the eeriness of the theme. So confidently does Irving hold the balance that he is able to risk closing on a note of extreme slyness: "And it is a common wish of all henpecked husbands in the neighbourhood, when life hangs heavily on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle's flagon."

A famous companion story is "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" in the same volume. Two years later Irving published *Bracebridge Hall*, maintaining his previous high level as a genially human miniaturist, and presenting an admirable foil to the brave, broad, and Odyssean romance of his contemporary, James Fenimore Cooper. Irving died in 1859.

By this time American literature was in full flood, although it is curious that Irving's influence was not noticeable in any of the humorous writings that followed on the heels of his chief successes. Their form was often the same, that of the short sketch and essay in which was recorded an existing state of manners, but they introduced the traits with which American humour has become generally associated, a tendency towards burlesque of a violently grotesque nature, and a raw localism of accent first used with effect by Thomas Chandler Haliburton (1796-1865), the Canadian creator of "Sam Slick," a Yankee pedlar and clockmaker. Indeed, the recipe which practically all the American humorists have worked on is that of creating a central character more or less individual, and letting him talk.

American culture, though here and there, as in Boston, almost European, was still in its unsophisticated stages for the most part, and even James Russell Lowell did not disdain the use of dialect and the manifold forms of drollery then in vogue. *The Biglow Papers* (1848) is his best work.



and the first of modern satires in English. A good deal of it has lost interest, but there are poems in the volume which will always captivate through their grotesque humour, sparkling wit, and quaint mannerisms. *The Courtin'*, as an example, is the simple story of a young man, Zekle, who one night "crep' up quite unbeknown and peeked in thru' the winder, an' there sot Huldy all alone." Now Huldy thought much of Zekle: he was "six foot o' man, A 1, who had sparked it with full twenty gals, but couldn't love any of them":

She thought no v'ice hed sech a swing  
Ez hisn in the choir;  
My! when he made Ole Hundred ring,  
She *knowed* the Lord was nigher.

When Zekle eventually summoned up courage to enter Huldy's kitchen:

He stood a spell on one foot fust,  
Then stood a spell on t'other,  
An' on which one he felt the wust  
He couldn' ha' told ye nuther.

Zekle said: "I'd better call again." She said: "Think likely, *Mister*." That last word "stung him like a pin," and . . . well, everything came right immediately, "Mister" rhyming, of course, with "kissed her."

A simple, homely tale, but related with great charm, and Lowell was to write many of the like before he laid down his pen. A second series of *Biglow Papers*, quieter in tone but still rich in comedy, appeared fifteen years after that first success, and they were as well received as the earlier series. But now they had to share their audience with the thorough-going capers of Henry Wheeler Shaw (1818-1885) and Charles Farrar Browne (1834-1867), the former of whom is faintly remembered under the pseudonym of "Josh Billings" and the latter well remembered as "Artemus Ward."

The prevalent habit of comic misspelling was exploited by Billings and Ward to the utmost limit, producing an amazing blend of illiteracy and worldly shrewdness, to which was added, especially in the case of Billings, a mocking vein of really sound and original moralising. Billings preferred the epigrammatic method. "Trusting to luck," he would say, "is only another name for 'trusting to laziness.'" Again, "Human happiness kinsists in having what yu want, and wanting what yu hav." Two of his best sayings refer to the same human quality:

A vivid imaginashun iz like sum glasses, makes things at a distance look twice az big az they am, and cluss to, twice az small az they am. . . . Imaginashun, tew mutch indulged in, soon iz tortured into reality: this iz one way that good hoss thieves are made, a man leans over a fence all day, and imagines the hoss in the lot belongs tew him, and sure enuff, the fust dark night, the hoss does.



In 1858, when Charles Farrar Browne was twenty-four, he wrote a description of an imaginary travelling menagerie, under the pen-name of "Artemus Ward, Showman." The story took the country by storm, and as the author immediately began to show that in retailing his ludicrous mixture of sense and nonsense he was as much at home on the lecture-platform as in composing humorous pieces for the newspapers, his success was duplicated everywhere. *Artemus Ward, his Book*, and *Artemus Ward in England* are perhaps the best known of his writings on this side of the Atlantic. (It was in England that, at an early age, he died from pulmonary disease.) But *Artemus Ward among the Mormons* (whose religion is singular, he explained, but their wives are plural) and *Artemus Ward, his Panorama*, are equally characteristic.

## § 10

The broader type of humour, especially that which depended for its appeal on word-caricature, seems to have temporarily exhausted its vein by the opening of the Civil War, partly because of the uproarious lengths to which Billings and Ward had taken it, and partly because the reading public's attention had been diverted by a different kind of humorist, Oliver Wendell Holmes, who was the first successor of Washington Irving fit to rank alongside him. Holmes was a Professor of Anatomy and Physiology, and he was nearly fifty years of age when his *Autocrat at the Breakfast Table* (1857-1858) was published and at once greeted with universal acclamation. In this go-as-you-please volume, the playfully wise sayings, thoughts, and set discourses of a philosopher are relieved here and there by the delicious vignettes of a poet, both combined in a single person who holds forth to his fellow-lodgers in a boarding-house. Here is the autocrat's criticism of a habit which, as we have seen, his countrymen indulged in at that time very freely :

A pun does not commonly justify a blow in return. But if the blow were given for such cause, and death ensued, the jury would be judges both of the facts and of the pun, and might, if the latter were of an aggravated character, return a verdict of justifiable homicide. Thus, in a case lately decided, Doe presented Roe a subscription paper, and urged the claims of suffering humanity. Roe replied by asking, When charity was like a top? It was in evidence that Doe preserved a dignified silence. Roe then said, "When it begins to hum." Doe then—and not till then—struck Roe, and his head happening to hit a bound volume of the *Monthly Rag-Bag and Stolen Miscellany*, intense mortification ensued, with a fatal result. The chief laid down his notions of the law to his brother justices, who unanimously replied "Jest so." The chief rejoined that no man should jest so without being punished for it, and charged for the prisoner, who was acquitted, and the pun ordered to be burned by the Sheriff. . . . But

Majesty itself must have its royal quibble. "Ye be burly, my Lord of Burleigh," said Queen Elizabeth. "but ye shall make less stir in our realm than my Lord of Leicester."

Often there is a sob audible before the laughter has gone far. A charming love-story runs through *The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table*—this, incidentally, giving the book a right to be classed as fiction. The autocrat had walked morning after morning with the schoolmistress. But though master of the breakfast table he dared speak no word of love. One morning, as they approached what was called the "long path," he determined to bring the affair to an issue :

I felt very weak indeed (though of a tolerably robust habit) as we came opposite the head of this path on that morning. I think I tried to speak twice without making myself distinctly audible. At last I got out the question, "Will you take the long path with me?" "Certainly," said the schoolmistress, "with much pleasure." "Think," I said, "before you answer; if you take the long path with me now I shall interpret it that we are to part no more!" The schoolmistress stepped back with a sudden movement, as if an arrow had struck her. One of the long granite blocks used as seats was hard by, the one you may still see close by the Gingko-tree. "Pray sit down," I said. "No, no," she answered, softly, "I will walk the *long path* with you!"

The success of *The Autocrat*, like that of Irving's *Sketch Book* and Lowell's *Biglow Papers*, overtopped the successes of the broader, comedian-like writers. Holmes followed up his first hit with *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* and *The Poet at the Breakfast Table*, characterised by their author as the wine squeezed into the press after the first juice that runs of itself from the fruit. These volumes resembled their predecessor in that they were steeped in a winning personality, but whereas *The Professor* was published soon after the first of the series, *The Poet* came only in 1873, and the effect of the Civil War was apparent in its greater soberness. Other writers differed from Holmes in this, for after the Civil War there was a return to boisterousness; but with a difference, for while it reached its most artistic achievements so far through Bret Harte, Charles Godfrey Leland, John Hay, Joel Chandler Harris, and Mark Twain, it was never devoid of a tender quality, the tenderness of disillusioned idealists, entitling many of their pages to rank for their universal note with those of Irving and Holmes.

## § II

The greatest of all the writers named is, of course, Mark Twain; and as in him were combined to the highest degree the qualities which separately accounted for the popularity of the others, it will be more convenient to approach his work through theirs, not forgetting that he was the vortex,



the heart, the pumping engine of this new lusty blood. For in 1857 he published *The Celebrated Jumping Frog, and other Sketches*, scaling the peaks of popularity "at a single jump."

But Mark Twain was master of all the post-Civil War humorists. He outlived practically all of them, moreover, although born in 1835; even before his death (which took place in 1910) it was plain that his work would outlive theirs also. The qualities in which they excelled are his qualities, for he has "the dry, incisive humour of the man of the world who, having gone through life with his eyes wide open, has cheered himself by laughing not merely at the follies of his fellow-men, but, by implication, at himself as well." Samuel Langhorne Clemens was his baptismal name, and though at a dinner-party in London he humorously gave his birthplace as Aberdeen, County Cork, England, the honour really fell to Florida, Monroe County, Missouri. He had to shift for himself when he was but twelve years old.

At seventeen he was a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi River. It was from the custom of calling the soundings "mark one," "mark twain," "mark three," to indicate the depth of the river in fathoms that he borrowed his pseudonym. His early experiences have all been turned to account in his writings. Often they are done with a purpose, as in *A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur*, where an American, finding himself in the middle of King Arthur's England, proceeds to strip off the glamour and tinsel of "chivalry," and show the evils and misery that actually existed. But the two books on which his great reputation was originally founded, and which represent him in his early achievement, are *The Jumping Frog* and *The Innocents Abroad*. These are medleys of fact and imagination, the facts of course being exaggerated to the limits of absurdity. A sense of the absurd, indeed, is Mark Twain's greatest asset, even when it tells against himself. At Delhi, for instance, two monkeys got into his room. He writes: "When I woke, one of them was before the glass brushing his hair, and the other one had my notebook, and was reading a page of humorous notes, and crying. I did not mind the one with the hair-brush, but the conduct of the other one hurt me; it hurts me yet."

*The Innocents Abroad* is an account of travel in the Mediterranean and the adjacent countries. A party of "innocents" adopt the rôle of impervious Philistines, with no reverence for the works or figures of antiquity, the historical and sacred memorials about which the sentimental tourist, guidebook in hand, is in the habit of raving.

Here, for example, is his impression of some of the old masters of Venice:

But, humble as we are, and unpretending, in the matter of Art, our researches among the painted monks and martyrs have not been wholly in vain. We



have striven hard to learn. We have had some success. We have mastered some things, possibly of trifling import in the eyes of the learned, but to us they give pleasure, and we take as much pride in our little acquirements as do others who have learned far more, and we love to display them full as well. When we see a monk going about with a lion and looking tranquilly up to heaven, we know that that is St. Mark. When we see a monk with a book and a pen, looking tranquilly up to heaven, trying to think of a word, we know that that is St. Matthew. When we see a monk sitting on a rock, looking tranquilly up to heaven, with a human skull beside him, and without other baggage, we know that that is St. Jerome. Because we know that he always went flying light in the matter of baggage. When we see a party looking tranquilly up to heaven, unconscious that his body is shot through and through with arrows, we know that that is St. Sebastian. When we see other monks looking tranquilly up to heaven but having no trade-mark, we always ask who those parties are.

In *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* he created two characters which belong to the immortal boys of fiction. Huckleberry was a study from the life, while Tom was a kind of composite portrait of three boys. Most of their adventures were events that really happened, either to Mark himself or to his schoolfellows—so that the effect of these fine free stories is intensely vivid and alive—*Huckleberry Finn* has been called a boy's epic of the Mississippi—the call of Nature to a lad's imagination—playing at brigands and parodying all the extravagances of the *Arabian Nights*.

Bret Harte described Mark Twain as he appeared on their first meeting :

His head was striking. He had the curly hair, the aquiline nose, and even the aquiline eye—an eye so eagle-like that even a second lid would not have surprised me—of an unusual and dominant nature. His eyebrows were very thick and bushy. His dress was careless, and his general manner one of supreme indifference to surroundings and circumstances. He spoke in a slow, rather satirical drawl, which was in itself irresistible.

In Washington Irving, James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Mark Twain the spirit of that "melting-pot" of extreme, noisy youth and sensitive, unembittered old age is perfectly symbolised. That inside a single century any country should have four such masters on the roll of its literary history is a very rare thing, and by virtue of them alone America's contribution to the world's literature already ranks high.

The success of Francis Bret Harte (1839-1902) came by virtue of a single poem. He had written a burlesque in rhyme, telling of the doings of a certain Chinaman, Ah Sin ("and I shall not deny with regard to the same what that name might imply"). Ah Sin was the owner of a smile that was "pensive and childlike," seeming so guileless that it was natural for two rascally gamblers to engage him in a game at cards. The sleeve of one of these "was stuffed full of aces, and the same with intent to deceive." But the Chinnee played and won, "with the smile that was childlike and



bland" on his face all the time. The confederates got angry in the end and "went for" that heathen Chinee, with the following discovery as a consequence :

In his sleeves, which were long,  
He had twenty-four packs,  
Which was coming it strong,  
Yet I state but the facts ;  
And we found on his nails, which were taper,  
What is frequent in taper—that's wax.

Which is why I remark,  
And my language is plain,  
That for ways that are dark,  
And for tricks that are vain,  
The heathen Chinee is peculiar,—  
Which the same I am free to maintain.

Harte had put the verses aside as too crude and trifling for publication. Some time later, just as the magazine he was editing in San Francisco was going to press, it was discovered that there was one page of "copy" short. Having nothing else on hand, Harte had *The Heathen Chinee* set up. Instead of passing unnoticed, the poem was quoted and recited everywhere ; "it swept the West and captivated the East." His famous story, *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, followed, and this time England acclaimed him. He was, indeed, a lesser, transplanted Dickens. The titles of his stories indicate their theme : *The Outcast of Poker Flat*, *How Santa Claus came to Simpson's Bar*, *Wan Lee, the Pagan*, *The Idyll of Red Gulch*. The *Atlantic Monthly* paid him ten thousand dollars to write for a year in the vein.

## § 12

In the year of *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, Colonel John Hay (1838-1906) published his *Pike County Ballads*, which included those masterly mixtures of humour and pathos, *Little Breeches* and *Jim Bludso*, the latter a story in verse of a rough and "keerless" engine-driver who gave his life for his passengers :

He warn't no saint,—but at jedgement  
I'd run my chance with Jim,  
'Longside of some pious gentlemen  
That wouldn't shook hands with him.

He seen his duty, a dead-sure thing,—  
And went for it thar and then ;  
And Christ ain't a goin' to be too hard  
On a man that died for men.

The *Pike County Ballads* were a happy accident rather than a deliberate or characteristic creative effort. Hay had returned from Spain to find everybody at home reading Bret Harte's poems and stories. He speculated upon the possibility of doing something similar, and the result was six racy ballads, different from anything he had ever done before. Strangely enough, he himself regarded them as inferior to his more orthodox work; he talked about them reluctantly and even hoped they would be forgotten. Posterity has, of course, decided otherwise. The rest of his work is hardly remembered, except perhaps *The Enchanted Shirt*, which has gone into legend.

A success almost contemporaneous with these was that of Charles Godfrey Leland (1824-1903). He sprang to fame in 1871 with his famous ballads of *Hans Breitmann* ("broad or huge man," hinting at a big swaggerer or burly boaster). Leland depended on a grotesque mixture of German and American English, known as Pennsylvania Dutch:

Hans Breitmann gif a barty;  
 Dey hat biano-blain',  
 I felled in luf mit a 'Merican frau,  
 Here name vas Madilda Yanc. . . .  
 Der pootiest Fraulein in der hause,  
 She vayed 'pout doo hoondred poundt,  
 Und efery dime she gif a shoomp  
 She make der vindere sound.

### § 13

Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908) ventured even further afield than did Leland with his Pennsylvania Dutchman. Indeed, he introduced a new variety of humour altogether with *Uncle Remus* (1880) and its sequels, *Nights with Uncle Remus* and *Uncle Remus and his Friends*. In these are superbly enshrined Harris's researches into negro folk-lore. Students as well as children for several decades have been arrested and delighted by the myth stories of old Remus, a shrewd, humorous old negro-product of the plantation system, a sort of uncouth Æsop of Georgia. He had an endless store, and the author asked the reader to imagine them being told night after night to a little boy. The sayings and doings of Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox, the wolf, the bear, and so on, each a racy personality with definite traits, are irresistible. Harris was equally effective in his fragments of negro-philosophy—"I am glad," is one example, "that man waz the last thing made. If man hadn't hav bin made at all, you would never have



heard me find enny fault about it." His negro-poetry has slyness lurking even in its moments of plaintive charm :

Hi my rinktum ! Black gal sweet,  
Same like goodies w'at de w'ite folks eat.

James Whitcomb Riley and Eugene Field, the former with his verse of artless rusticity :

When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock,  
And you hear the kyouch and gobble of the struttin' turkey-cock,  
And the clackin' of the guineys, and the cluckin' of the hens,  
And the rooster's hallylooyer as he tiptoes on the fence ;

the latter with his brilliant burlesque

I ain't afraid uv snakes or toads, or bugs or worms or mice,  
An' things 'at girls are skeered uv I think are awful nice !

and with his equally characteristic and rather better-known poems of childhood, such as *Little Boy Blue*, have their niches in American humorous literature.

## READING LIST

For a general study of American writers see Trent & Erskine's *Great Writers of America* in the Home University Library (Oxford University Press) ; for a general anthology of American prose, see M. Van Doren, *The Oxford Book of American Prose*.

JOHN WOOLMAN :

*Journal* in Everyman's Library (Dent).

TOM PAINE :

*Rights of Man*, etc. (Watts) ; *Life*, by J. M. Robertson (Watts).

R. W. EMERSON :

*Collected Works* with Introduction by Viscount Morley, 6 vols. (Macmillan).

The following volumes are published in the Everyman's Library (Dent) : *Essays* ; *Representative Men* ; *Nature, Conduct of Life*, etc. ; *Society and Solitude*, etc. ; *Poems*. In the World's Classics are *Essays* and *English Traits* ; *Representative Men*.

Garnett's *Emerson*, in the Great Writers Series (Hudson).

Oliver Wendell Holmes's *Life of R. W. Emerson* (Kegan Paul).

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE :

The following are published in the Everyman's Library (Dent) : *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables*, *A Wonder Book*, *The Marble Faun*, *Twice Told Tales*, *The Blithedale Romance*. In the World's Classics : *The Scarlet Letter* and *Tales*.

Henry James's *Hawthorne*, in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

M. D. Conway's *Hawthorne*, in the Great Writers Series (Hudson).

LONGFELLOW :

*Complete Poetical Works* (Routledge).

*Tales of a Wayside Inn*, separately (Routledge).

*Poetical Works*, 2 vols. in the World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

*Hyperion* (Walter Scott).

E. S. Robertson's *Longfellow*, in the Great Writers Series (Hudson).

EDGAR ALLAN POE :

*Complete Poetical Works*, edited by R. B. Johnson (Oxford University Press).

*Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, Introduction by J. R. Lowell, Everyman's Library (Dent) ; World's Classics ; Nelson Classics.

*Tales Grotesque*, Collins's Pocket Classics.

Arthur Ransome's *Edgar Allan Poe : a Critical Study* (Methuen).

L. N. Chase's *Poe and his Poetry* (Harrap).

AMBROSE BIERCE :

His best-known works are published in England by Cape. "Ambrose Bierce," by Eric Partridge, in *Literary Sessions* (Scholartis Press).

WALT WHITMAN :

*Leaves of Grass*, Centenary edition, complete (Appleton). Also in Everyman's Library (Dent).

*Leaves of Grass*, edited by Ernest de Sélincourt (Oxford University Press).

*Democratic Vistas, and Other Pieces* (Prose) (Routledge).

*Poems*, selected and edited, with an Introduction by William Michael Rossetti (Chatto & Windus).

*Drum-Taps* (Chatto & Windus).

J. Addington Symonds's *Walt Whitman : a Study* (Routledge).

B. de Sélincourt's *Walt Whitman : a Critical Study* (Martin Secker).

H. B. Binns's *Walt Whitman and his Poetry* (Harrap).

WHITTIER :

*Complete Poetical Works* (Oxford University Press).

*Poems of Whittier*, a selection in the World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

W. H. Hudson's *Whittier and his Poetry* (Harrap).

G. K. Lewis's *John G. Whittier : a Study of the American Quaker Poet* (George Allen & Unwin).



HARRIET BEECHER STOWE :

*Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in the Everyman's Library (Dent) and the Nelson Classics Series.

Messrs. Sampson Low publish Mrs. Stowe's *Dred*, *Old Town Folk*, and various other works.

THOREAU :

Messrs. Constable publish the Riverside edition of Thoreau's works in 11 volumes.

*Walden* in the Everyman's Library (Dent), and in Penguin Series.

*Essays and other Writings*, in the Scott Library (Hudson).

*A Week on the Concord* (Dent).

*Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers*, selected and edited by H. A. Salt (George Allen & Unwin).

Salt's *Life of Thoreau*, in the Great Writers Series (Hudson).

WASHINGTON IRVING :

Messrs. Bell publish the Complete Works, 15 vols. (Bohn's Library).

*The Conquest of Granada*, the World's Classics.

*Rip Van Winkle*, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, and other Sketches, edited by H. M. Buller (Macmillan).

*Bracebridge Hall*, in Bohn's Popular Library (Bell).

The following are obtainable in Everyman's Library (Dent) : *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon*, *The Conquest of Granada*, *Life of Mahomet*.

S. T. Williams, *Washington Irving* : an exhaustive biography (Oxford University Press).

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL :

*Collected Writings*, in 11 vols. (Macmillan).

*Complete Poetical Works* (Ward, Lock).

*Among My Books*, in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

*My Study Windows*, in the Scott Library (Hudson).

*The Biglow Papers*, in the Scott Library (Hudson).

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES :

*Poetical Works* (Routledge).

*The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table*, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, and *The Poet at the Breakfast Table* can be obtained in the Everyman's Library (Dent) ; the first and third in the World's Classics.

*Elsie Venner* (Routledge).

MARK TWAIN :

Mark Twain's Works, including *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, etc., are published by Chatto & Windus.

Routledge publish cheap editions of a few of them.

THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

*Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer*, Nelson Classics.

*The Innocents Abroad*, Collins's Pocket Classics.

*Letters of Mark Twain*, edited by A. B. Paine (Chatto & Windus).

A. B. Paine's *Mark Twain*, a Biography, 2 vols. (Harper).

W. D. Howells's *My Mark Twain*, Reminiscences and Criticisms (Harper).

COLONEL JOHN HAY :

*Poems* (John Lane).

*Castilian Days* (John Lane).

*Pike County Ballads* (Routledge).

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS :

*Uncle Remus* (Routledge) ; Nelson Classics ; the World's Classics.

*Nights with Uncle Remus* (Routledge).

*Life and Letters of Joel Chandler Harris*, by Julia Collier Harris (Constable).

*American Short Stories of the Nineteenth Century*, edited by John Cournos (Everyman's Library).



## THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH WRITERS

## § I

THE early nineteenth-century literary reawakening of France came with the beginning of the romantic movement, with which the great names of Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas are connected. The most famous of the prose-writers associated with Victor Hugo was the celebrated critic, Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, who was born in 1804 and died in 1869. Sainte-Beuve began his literary career as a poet and a novelist, but early in his life he discovered that criticism was his real *métier*. He was the first literary critic to base criticism on wide knowledge and sympathetic study, disregarding traditional critical rules. Lord Morley once said that it was worth a man's while to learn French if only to read Sainte-Beuve. Some of his most interesting work is to be found in his *Causeries du Lundi* (Monday Talks), essays which originally appeared as newspaper articles. For years these Monday criticisms were the most interesting literary event in Europe. Sainte-Beuve dealt most frequently with French authors, but very often with English and classical literature. "It has been my wish," he once said, "to introduce a kind of charm into criticism and, at the same time, more reality than was previously introduced. In short, at once more poetry and more physiology. . . ."

At one time Sainte-Beuve had a particularly imperious editor, with whom, after many quarrels, he fought a duel. The critic fought with a pistol in one hand and an umbrella in the other. "I am willing to be killed," he said, "but I don't want to get wet."

Sainte-Beuve also quarrelled with Victor Hugo on account of his affection for the poet's wife. In his old age, bitterly regretting the passions that cost him a splendid friendship, he wrote against Madame Hugo's name, "I hate her."

Amandine Lucile Aurore Dupin, who used the pen-name of George Sand, was born in 1804 and died in 1876. In our days she is perhaps remembered far more for her love-affairs with de Musset and Chopin, two men whom she succeeded in making utterly miserable, than for her books, of which she wrote nearly a hundred. George Sand was the inventor of the "unappreciated woman," a figure whom later and lesser novelists have so frequently employed. She carried on a long correspondence with

Gustave Flaubert, and her letters have the qualities of charm and understanding.

She was an easy, fluent writer, working industriously in the manner of Anthony Trollope, but her writing is interesting to posterity only when it is frankly autobiographical. When she was quite young she was married to a Colonel Dudevant, a man many years her senior, who treated her with cold neglect and with whom she spent eight unhappy years. She left him after finding his will, in which curses were his only legacy to her. Paris and novel-writing followed her separation from her husband. Her first notable book was *Lucretia Floriani*, in which she describes her love-affair with Chopin and in which the gentle musician is certainly not flattered. Years afterwards, and after his death, she made her intrigue with de Musset the subject of *Elle et Lui*. These two books with her letters, the most interesting of which, as has been stated, were written to Gustave Flaubert, are, with the addition of several charming rustic novels, the literary works of George Sand that remain of value and interest.

Prosper Mérimée, author of *Carmen* (1846), known nowadays merely as the subject of Bizet's opera, was born in 1803 and died in 1870. While he definitely belongs to the romantic school of writers he was entirely out of sympathy with its eccentricities and exaggerations. Mérimée met Madame de Montijo, the mother of the Empress Eugénie, while he was living in Spain, and after Eugénie's marriage with Napoleon III he became an intimate friend of the emperor and empress.

Lesser writers whose names are associated with the romantic movement are the prolific popular novelist, Eugene Sue (1804-1857), author of *The Wandering Jew*; Erckmann and Chatrian, authors of *L'Ami Fritz* and *The History of a Conscript in 1813* (both published in 1864), and other Alsatian stories in which the glory of Napoleon is not allowed entirely to cover the horrors of militarism; and Emile Gaboriau, the very ingenious inventor of the detective story.

## § 2

The romantic writers were almost entirely interested in the past, to which they attempted to give new life by the beauty of their writing and by all the artifices of rhetoric. French literature was again made actual, as it was with Molière, and was brought back from the past to the present by Stendhal, whose great novel, *The Red and the Black* (1831), may be regarded as the beginning of French realism. Stendhal's real name was Marie Henri Beyle. He was born in 1783 and died in 1842. He served in the Napoleonic armies and was present at Marengo, Jena, and the Moscow disaster. He had sufficient sympathy with the romanticists vastly to



prefer Shakespeare to Racine, but in *The Red and the Black*, by far the most important of his novels, he is not only concerned with the realistic presentation of contemporary life but he also revolts against the sentimental sympathy with the poor and oppressed that finds expression in such a novel as Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. The principal figure of *The Red and the Black* is a consummate scoundrel who contrives to have a particularly pleasant life through the force of his entirely amoral character. In the general scheme of his story, Stendhal to some extent anticipates Nietzsche in the doctrine of the all-conquering "blonde beast." Every character in the story is subtly individualised, and there is in it that "remorseless fidelity to truth" that is the outstanding quality of modern French fiction. Almost as fine is *The Chartreuse of Parma* (1839).

Important as Stendhal is, he is completely overshadowed by Honoré de Balzac, described by Sainte-Beuve as the greatest Frenchman who ever lived. Balzac was born in 1799 and died in 1850, and he too, quite inevitably, was at the beginning of his career affected by the prevailing romanticism of the time.

In 1842 Balzac conceived the great scheme of the *Human Comedy*, a long series of novels, the basic idea of which was, as he himself said, "the history of the human heart traced thread by thread, and social history made in all its parts"—a vast picture of the life of his time. It is said that the idea came to him from Dante, the contrast between the *Human Comedy* and the *Divine Comedy* being the contrast between the spiritual Florentine poet and the French novelist with what Lytton Strachey has called "his coarse, large, germinating spirit." Life to Balzac was comedy in the ironic sense :

Even these actors, still this comedy ;  
And spite all gloss of man's hypocrisy,  
One truth lies under all—a skeleton.

The *Human Comedy* is divided into sections—scenes of private life, scenes of provincial life, scenes of Parisian life, scenes of political life, scenes of military life, scenes of country life, philosophical studies, analytical studies. As it was first conceived by Balzac it was to consist of a hundred and thirty-three separate volumes, but many of them were never written. No novelist has ever conceived such a gigantic scheme, no novelist has ever created on the same great scale. He lives in French literature as Dickens lives in English literature, by his gallery of brilliant portraits, among whom the women have the greater vitality. "Women," said Henry James, "are the keynote of the *Human Comedy*. If the men were taken out there would be great gaps and fissures ; if the women were taken out the whole fabric would collapse."



Balzac created realism. He cared for nothing so much as truth. He was moved by Victor Hugo's poetry, but he declared against the "childish folly of prisons and coffins, and a thousand ridiculous absurdities," and declared that Victor Hugo was a "Titian painting his frescoes on a wall of mud." At another time he described the romantic novelists as "riding on horseback over vacuum." But Balzac was never quite able to cure himself of romanticism, and he often falls into the melodramatic sentimentality of the novelette. Probably he wrote too much always to write well. A French critic, Emile Faguet, has even gone so far as to say, "Balzac was a very bad writer."

He succeeded in demonstrating the drama of everyday life, the passion of the commonplace. His characters are modern men and women actuated by the motives of the modern world, and he has the curious quality of most realistic writers of being more successful with the unpleasant and repulsive than with the good and attractive. Perhaps the masterpieces of the *Human Comedy* (1830-1848) are: *Le Peau de Chagrin*, *Le Curé de Tours*, *Eugénie Grandet*, *Le Chef-d'œuvre Inconnu*, *Le Père Goriot*, *Le Curé du Village*, *La Cousine Bette*, *Le Cousin Pons*. In addition to the *Human Comedy*, Balzac wrote the *Contes Drolatiques* (1832-1837), extraordinary imitations of Rabelais written in mediæval French. Like Scott, Balzac was spurred on to his amazing literary activity by his constant need of money, though, unlike Scott, his difficulties were all of his own making. His father had intended that he should become a lawyer, but when he was twenty-one Balzac declared his intention of making literature his vocation, whereupon he was promptly left half to starve in a Paris garret in the hope that he would see the error of his ways.

Early in his life he started a long series of letters written to various women, in which he told his ambitions and revealed his character. From 1825 to 1828 Balzac endeavoured to make his fortune as a publisher, printer, and type-founder. The result was bankruptcy and a debt of a hundred thousand francs, which it took him ten years to pay. He generally started work at twelve o'clock at night, and would often go on writing for sixteen hours at a stretch. As Sir Frederick Wedmore has well said, "Balzac hardly had time to live: always working, always in debt, always a spendthrift." In the de Goncourts' diary there is an excellent story of Balzac and Lord Hertford, who spent his life in Paris and to whose taste the English nation owes the Wallace Collection. Hertford wanted to meet Balzac, and an interview was arranged; but at the last moment a friend of the novelist told the Englishman that Balzac could not keep the appointment because he was threatened with arrest for debt and imprisonment at Clichy, and dared only go out in the evening.

"Then Hertford shouted:



" 'Clichy . . . Clichy . . . what does he owe ?' "

" 'A huge sum,' replied Lacroix ; 'perhaps 40,000 francs, perhaps 50,000 francs, perhaps more.' "

" 'Well, let him come, and I'll pay his debts.' "

" In spite of this promise, Hertford could never persuade Balzac to meet him. "

Balzac lost his money in mad harum-scarum schemes. His three years' experience of business had given him a permanent interest in money-making. The interest was continually shown in his novels, and in real life he endeavoured to imitate his characters, with dire results. The author of *An Englishman in Paris* once asked Méry how Balzac's money went, and he replied :

In sops to his imagination, in balloons to the land of dreams, which balloons he constructs with his hard-won earnings and inflates with the essence of his visions, but which nevertheless will not rise three feet from the earth. . . . Balzac is firmly convinced that every one of his characters has had, or has still, its counterpart in real life, notably the characters that have risen from humble beginnings to great wealth ; and he thinks that, having worked out the secret of their success on paper, he can put it in practice. He embarks on the most harum-scarum speculations without the slightest practical knowledge ; as, for instance, when he drew the plans for his country house at Ville d'Avray, and insisted upon the builder carrying them out in every respect while he was away. When the place was finished there was not a single staircase. Of course, they had to put them outside, and he maintained that it was part of his original plan ; but he had never given a thought to the means of ascent.

He made grandiose plans of the garden of his country house. Part of it was to be a dairy, and in another part he proposed to grow pineapples and Malaga grapes, from which he calculated he would make at least 30,000 francs a year. Another of his money-making schemes was to melt the silver of the slag-heaps in the Roman mines in Sardinia.

Balzac was no democrat. "Proletarians seem to me," he said, "to be the minors of a nation, and ought always to remain under guardianship."

But despite his preference for aristocratic governments, Balzac never really succeeded in convincingly drawing a gentleman, and he himself had few of the qualities of the well-bred. Madame de Berny, perhaps the wisest of his many women friends, wrote to him in 1832 : "Have it so : the whole multitude notices you from all sides owing to the height at which you stand, but don't cry out to them to admire you." The first of his women correspondents was his sister ; the last a wealthy Polish woman called Madame du Hanska. The friendship lasted for many years, and Balzac often broke his work in Paris to journey half across Europe to see her. They were married on August 20, 1850, shortly before Balzac's death. His letters to her are a joy to those who read French with ease.



In his funeral discourse, Victor Hugo declared that Balzac's writing was "instinct with observation and imagination." As with Dickens, the imagination sometimes obscures the reality. To quote Saintsbury: "Everything is seen through a kind of distorting lens, though the actual vision is defined with the greatest precision and in the most vivid colours. . . . He can analyse vice and meanness with wonderful vigour, and he is almost unmatched in the power of conferring apparent reality upon what the reader feels to be imaginary and ideal. It follows almost necessarily that he is happiest when his subject has a strong touch of the fantastic." From this point of view the *Peau de Chagrin*, the story of a magic skin, is perhaps Balzac's masterpiece.

## § 3

Gustave Flaubert was a Norman, born at Rouen in 1821. He spent the six years from 1850 to 1856 writing his great novel, *Madame Bovary*, the first example, as it is certainly the finest, of absolute French realistic fiction, as compared with the semi-sentimental realism of Balzac.

*Madame Bovary* is a picture of provincial life in the middle years of the nineteenth century. It was the life to which Flaubert belonged and which he knew intimately. Like most artists who have sprung from the bourgeoisie, he had a bitter antipathy to his own class, and in *Madame Bovary* he suggests that the bourgeois is always ridiculous, but most ridiculous when, without any individual qualities, he endeavours to escape from the world to which he belongs. The outstanding qualities of *Madame Bovary* are acute observation, understanding of the motives that actuate ordinary men and women, beauty of style, and skill in differentiating between one ordinary individual and any other ordinary individual.

Flaubert was prosecuted for having written an immoral book in *Madame Bovary*; but it is in effect ruthlessly moral in its insistence that men must live their lives in the circles of their destiny. It is only the fool who runs away from reality to a world of lath and plaster theatricalism that calls itself romance.

Between 1857 and 1861 Flaubert worked simultaneously at *The Temptation of St. Anthony* and *Salammbô*, which appeared in 1862. *The Sentimental Education* was published in 1869, and eight years later he brought out a volume of three short stories. The last months of his life were passed in writing *Bouvard and Pecuchet*, which was published after his death on May 8, 1880.

Flaubert, like Molière and Balzac, was never a member of the French Academy. Though the author of *Madame Bovary* must necessarily live



in literary history as a master of realism, Flaubert was temperamentally a romantic. He loved colour and light, and was fascinated by the mysterious. He loved rhetoric as much as Victor Hugo loved it, and it is characteristic of him that after finishing *Madame Bovary*, a story of everyday France, he wrote *Salammbô*, in which he recreated the life of ancient Carthage. When he began to write this work he said to one of his friends: "I am tired of ugly things and vulgar surroundings. I am going to live for some years perhaps in a splendid subject and away from the modern world, of which I am sick." Here is the voice of the true romantic eager to escape from reality.

Flaubert's remarkable correspondence with George Sand was published after his death, and these letters help one to understand his peculiar interest as a literary artist.

His preoccupation with style was a confession of what seemed to him his comparative littleness. The task of finding the "right word" and the exactly appropriate sentence was a torture. He says in a letter to George Sand: "You have no notion what it is to sit out an entire day with your head between your hands beating your unfortunate brains for a word." So eager was his interest in expression that in the end manner interested him entirely and matter not at all. He once wrote: "What I should like to write would be a book about nothing which would support itself by the internal force of style, as the earth is held in the air without being supported." But style without substance is chaos, and perhaps the most suggestive criticism of Flaubert's work is Wilfred Whitten's statement that Flaubert "never lacked substance, but he boiled it too long and watched the pot too long."

Flaubert has had an immense effect on the development of the art of fiction in France. The de Goncourts, Zola, and Daudet were his disciples, and there is hardly a considerable writer of modern fiction who has not looked to him as a master.

#### § 4

The naturalist group of French novelists includes the brothers de Goncourt, Emile Zola, Guy de Maupassant, and to some extent Alphonse Daudet and Joris Karl Huysmans. They professed to be the perfect disciples of Stendhal, Balzac, and Flaubert, recording the facts of life with photographic accuracy and rigorously avoiding any attempt at artistic setting. The brothers de Goncourt invented naturalism just as they invented, or claimed to invent, symbolism.

Edmond de Goncourt was born in 1822 and lived till 1896. His younger brother Jules was born in 1830 and died in 1870. They were both men of



enormous industry and varied artistic interests. They introduced Japanese art to France, and Edmond's last book was about Hokusai, the famous Japanese artist. They wrote monographs, they wrote essays on eighteenth-century French society, they wrote novels, and they wrote plays. The phrase "human documents," now frequently used in literary criticism, was first employed by the de Goncourts. Their characters were always studies from life—reproductions of actual persons whom they had known, and they took enormous pains to retain a photographic accuracy and not to allow anything to be added by their imagination. With this devotion to unqualified realism, the de Goncourts cultivated a curious style, inventing words and using such unusual epithets that since their deaths an industrious French scholar has compiled a dictionary to explain their meaning.

Renan said: "I fear that the self-sacrifice of our realistic writers, who say that their only purpose is to provide documents by which future ages will know us, will be poorly rewarded." It has, so far as the de Goncourts are concerned, for their novels are nowadays never read. They have, however, a considerable place in literary history, not only because they were the pioneers of naturalism, but because of their *Journal*, which covers the period between 1851 and 1895, and in which the reader, while he is provided with much that is uninteresting and much that is scandalous and in execrable taste, is given an intimate literary history of middle nineteenth-century France. In the pages of the *Journal*, the reader meets Théophile Gautier, Gustave Flaubert, Victor Hugo, Ivan Turgenev, Emile Zola, Sainte-Beuve, Ernest Renan, Alphonse Daudet, as well as Sarah Bernhardt, Rejane, Clemenceau, Rodin, Pierre Loti, Anatole France, Alexandre Dumas (père et fils), Baudelaire, Oscar Wilde, and dozens of other well-known men and women.—Here it may be noted that the younger Dumas wrote some splendidlyactable plays and that very moving novel, *La Dame aux Camélias* (1848); he died in 1895 at the age of seventy-one. He was the earliest continental master of the sociological drama (later exploited so successfully by Ibsen and G. B. Shaw) and the *roman à thèse* (of which Dickens was likewise a master).—The *Journal* is fascinating, and there is probably no book in existence that gives so many lifelike portraits of men whose personalities and achievements remain of perennial interest.

It is extraordinarily interesting to note that naturalism, which began with a proclaimed devotion to truth and soon ceased to concern itself with anything but that which was repellent and unpleasant, attracted writers who were physically weak and diseased. Jules de Goncourt died at forty, possibly to some extent as a result of opiated cigars; Edmond was described by Sarcey, the famous French dramatic critic, as "a neurotic whom we must pity"; Zola was "sickly and neurotic"; Maupassant lost his reason when he was just over forty.



Edmond de Goncourt resented criticism, and was always unhappy because he and his brother were unappreciated. At the same time he had the most complete contempt for his contemporaries. The two brothers wrote in their diary in 1859 :

"If I were really wealthy, I should have enjoyed making a collection of all the muck that celebrities with no talent have turned out. I should get the worst picture, the worst statue of this man and that, and pay their weight in gold. I should hand this collection over to the admiration of the middle classes, and after having enjoyed their stupid amazement at the tickets and the high prices of the objects, I should let myself go off into criticism composed of gall, science, and taste, until I foamed at the mouth."

As a matter of fact, the de Goncourts were always foaming at the mouth.

Emile Zola's father was half Italian and half Greek. Emile was born in Paris in 1840. His father died when he was a boy, and after years of terrible privations he obtained a clerkship in the publishing-house of Hachette, where he was paid a salary of a pound a week. This was in 1862 ; but three years before, an Aix-les-Bains newspaper had published a short story of his, described by Edmund Gosse as "a fairy tale about an enchanted bud of sweet marjoram, which expands and reveals the amorous fay, guardian of the loves of Prince Lois and the fair Odette"—a strange beginning for the author of *La Terre* ! He followed this with other stories much in the same vein, with love-songs, hymns, and with an imitation of Dante. In 1864 he published a volume of his stories, all of them sentimental and idealistic. Years afterwards Zola referred to his youth of struggle with extraordinary bitterness, for with all his gifts he was born without a sense of humour.

He first met the de Goncourts in 1868, and they described him as "restless, anxious, profound, complicated, reserved, and not easily understood." He had already conceived the idea of his Rougon-Macquart series of novels, at which he worked for nearly thirty years. His idea was to describe in accurate detail the life of the members of a commonplace family, extenuating nothing and setting down nothing in malice. Each novel in the series deals with one aspect of everyday life : the *Ventre de Paris* with the markets ; *L'Assommoir* with the drinking-shops ; *La Bête Humaine* with the railways ; *Germinal* with the mines ; *L'Argent* with the world of finance ; *La Débâcle* with the horrors of 1870 ; *Lourdes* with what seemed to him the superstition of religion. He has himself summarised his ambition : "I am going to take a family and study its members one by one—whence they come, whither they are going, how they react upon each other. A bit of humanity apart, the way in which men act and behave. On the other hand, I will put my characters in a particular historical period which



will give me the environment and condition—a bit of history.” His aim, that is, was to give a complete picture of the time in which he lived. But he failed. As Jean Carrère has said, he depicted only the vices and the weaknesses of the time :

Unbalanced men, scoundrels, thieves, prostitutes, drunkards, stupid dreamers, unhealthy peasants, degraded workers, unclean bourgeois, cowardly soldiers, avaricious ministers, feeble artists, hysterical priests—all this is offered to us as a mirror of human nature. Not a single great man, not an elect soul, not a noble and strong individuality, not a hero—that is supposed to be the measure of our time. No joy, no triumphant effort, not a single healthy development—this is a picture of our life. We are promised a world, and we get a hospital. Surely this is incredible ignorance or incredible perversity !

Zola was a prodigious worker. His life was darkened by disappointments, most of all, oddly enough, by his failure to be elected to the Academy. His literary style has no great merit, but there is in some of his novels, particularly in *Le Rêve*, and in the well-known short story *L'Attaque du Moulin*, a suggestion of pity and sentiment that would seem to show that at heart Zola was an idealist and a romantic, and that Edmund Gosse may be justified in his assertion that it is in his little-known short stories that “the most genuine and characteristic productions of his pen are to be found.”

Pity and love of justice are certainly the note of Zola's personal life. He led the agitation in France at the end of the nineteenth century on behalf of the unfortunate Captain Dreyfus, denouncing in his famous letter, *J'Accuse*, the men who had hounded down Dreyfus, with magnificent vehemence and indignation.

Zola died in 1902, and Anatole France delivered a fervent eulogy over his grave. Perhaps the most accurate description of Zola as a writer ever made was George Moore's assertion that he was “a striking instance of the insanity of common sense.”

Guy de Maupassant was born in 1850. Like Flaubert, he was a Norman, and his great compatriot helped him a great deal at the beginning of his literary life. Maupassant was perhaps the greatest master of the short story who has ever lived, and it is a remarkable fact that the first short story of his ever published, *La Boule de Suif* (1880), has rarely been equalled either by himself or any other writer. Maupassant's literary life lasted only ten years, during which he wrote many short stories and half a dozen novels. It has been said of him that he destroyed naturalism because he carried it to its ultimate point. He professed to have no invention, but merely to reproduce men and life as he saw them. Unfortunately, the world that he saw was very unpleasant and the men and women in it generally repulsive.



Maupassant is almost as great a stylist as Flaubert. He always sought for the right word, and never used an unnecessary one, and the gloom of his naturalism is made tolerable by an ironic humour which neither the de Goncourts nor Zola possessed. Maupassant drugged himself. Soon after his fortieth birthday he became morbidly depressed. He was seized with general paralysis, became insane, and died in 1893.

Alphonse Daudet was born in 1840. His father was an unsuccessful trader. When he was sixteen Alphonse was compelled to become an usher in a school, and was thoroughly unhappy. After a year he contrived to get to Paris, where almost at once he obtained a small position on the staff of the *Figaro*.

After a year or two in Paris, Daudet became secretary to the Duc de Morny, half-brother of Napoleon III, a position he held till 1865. In 1866 he established a considerable literary reputation with his famous *Lettres de mon Moulin*. This book was followed by *Tartarin de Tarascon* (1872), *Sapho* (1884), and *L'Immortel* (1888). Daudet has sometimes been called the French Dickens, and there is a definite suggestion of the English master in a book of his called *Le Petit Chose* (1868). His naturalism, for what it is worth, is to be found in the fact that the central figures of many of his books are real persons very thinly disguised: thus, the Duc de Morny is concealed in the *Nabob* (1878), Gambetta is the hero of *Numa Roumestan* (1880), and *L'Immortel* is an attack on the members of the Academy, many of the characters and incidents being taken from life. It is safe to prophesy that Daudet's *Tartarin* will live in the memory as long as Mr. Pickwick. He himself declared that *Tartarin* was a "serious presentation of the South of France—a broader figure of Don Quixote." Daudet belonged to the South, and in *Tartarin* he has given the world a burlesque type of his own people as memorable as Sam Weller. There are, by the way, many resemblances to Dickens in the Daudet novels.

Like Zola, Daudet was a prodigious worker. He would often start writing at four in the morning and go on till eight, then from nine till twelve, from two till six, and again from eight till midnight. Daudet was a very happy man. His married life was fortunate; his home life was delightful; his friends were many—even the sour Edmond de Goncourt never found anything but good to say of him. Daudet died in Paris on December 17, 1897.

Joris Karl Huysmans was born in 1848. His family was of Dutch extraction, and he spent the greater part of his life in the French Civil Service. His first novel was published in 1876, and all his work until 1884 was Zolaesque in its minute, uncompromising, and relentless realism. In 1884 he published his remarkable book, *A Rebours*, an elaborately morbid study of a decadent aristocrat. This was followed by a study of



Satanism, and then by his masterpiece, *En Route* (1895), in which he describes the conversion of a hero, modelled on himself, to Catholicism and extreme mysticism. The naturalist turned mystic is still more evident in *La Cathédrale* (1898).

Huysmans died in 1907. It is curiously in accord with the morbidity of his novels that Huysmans was all his life a martyr to neuralgia and dyspepsia.

## § 5

The most famous French literary critic of the nineteenth century after the era of Sainte-Beuve and Théophile Gautier was Hippolyte Taine, who was born in 1828 and died in 1893. He wrote a history of English literature (1864-1865), a history of French nineteenth-century philosophers, and a great book which he called *The Origins of Contemporary France* (1876-1894). Both in method and in manner Taine may be compared to Macaulay, to whom he obviously owed much, although Taine is both more methodical and more rationalistic.

Auguste Comte, who was born in 1796 and died in 1857, was the founder of positivism. He remains the best known of nineteenth-century philosophers, interesting to English readers from the influence he exercised on Frederic Harrison.

The three best-known French historians of this period are Louis Adolphe Theiers, who was born in 1797 and died in 1877, and who was the first President of the Third Republic—perhaps more politician than historian; another politician-historian, François Guizot; and, by far the greatest, Jules Michelet (1798-1874), whose history of the French Revolution is unrivalled in its comprehensiveness, lucidity, and interest. Michelet hated England, French aristocracy, and all Catholics. In his power of making the past live in the present he is worthy to be compared with Carlyle, than whom, however, he is a much greater stylist.

Apart from the poets and novelists, by far the most interesting figure in the nineteenth-century literature of France is Ernest Renan. Renan was born in 1823 in a small and remote Breton seaport; he died in 1892. His father was a retail grocer, and all his family were miserably poor. The elder Renan was drowned when his son was a child of five, and the family for twenty years was maintained by his sister Henriette, to whom more than to any other person Renan owed the chances of his later life. He was sent to a clerical school, where, as he said, the priests taught him "the love of truth, respect for reason, and the seriousness of life." When he was fifteen and a half he was sent to a seminary in Paris, where he studied for seven years with the idea of entering the priesthood. He hesitated, however, before taking subdeacon's orders, which would have compelled him to



celibacy and bound him irrevocably to the service of the Church. He had been influenced by German philosophical writings and was attracted by Protestantism. His state of mind is expressed in a letter he wrote in 1845 to his sister, then a governess in Poland: "One must be a Christian, but one must not be orthodox." His sincerity and his devotion to what he considered truth compelled him to leave the seminary and accept a position as usher in a private school, the change being made possible by a gift of fifty pounds out of his sister's savings.

Although Renan abandoned his religion, he never resembled Voltaire in scoffing at the tenets of Christianity or at its priests. All through his life, indeed, he looked back to his early teachers with admiration and affection, declaring that in the seminary "there was enough virtue to govern the world." His first series of essays was published in 1857. In 1862 he was appointed Professor of Hebrew, Syriac, and Chaldean in the College of France, and he held this position till his death, except for a short interregnum in 1864, when he was dismissed by Napoleon III, who had a pious objection to the heterodoxy of Renan's famous *Life of Jesus* (1863).

Renan's best-remembered writings are the *Life of Jesus*, the magnificently written *Philosophical Dialogues* (1876), the *Origins of Christianity*, and the *History of the People of Israel* (1888-1892). He was the master of a gracious and exquisite style, and he has served as a model for most of the later French writers of distinction, notably for Anatole France and Pierre Loti; in this he resembles our English Newman.

The *Life of Jesus* is the work of a reverent sceptic, doubting miracles but filled with admiration for the life and teaching of the Founder of Christianity. It is a book of great beauty, and is in striking contrast to the German sceptic Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, which George Eliot translated into English.

## § 6

The youngest member of Victor Hugo's circle was, according to an eye-witness, "a pretty boy, with slim figure and flaxen hair, wide nostrils, and lips of vermilion red. His face, of high colour and oval shape, was remarkable for the fact that the place of the eyebrows was taken by what seemed two semi-circles of a blood-red tint. After dinner he entertained the company with a most lifelike imitation of a drunken man." This strange Benjamin was Alfred de Musset, then aged about thirteen.

The boy was born in Paris in the year 1810. His father was of noble birth and himself a writer of some note. It was Victor Hugo who first encouraged the young poet, but he grew up rather in the school of Byron, whose works he knew by heart. The ease and grace of Byron in *Don Juan*, the light touch of humour, the sudden rocket-towering into heights of

poetry, the regions of romance, all find their counterpart in *Mardoche* and *Namouna*. But it is strange that what chiefly roused the critics was a trifle—the verses in *The Ballad of the Moon* :

C'était, dans la nuit brune,  
Sur le clocher jauni, La lune,  
Comme un point sur un i.

To say that the moon stood above the steeple like a dot above an *i*, offended the romantics as too realistic, and the realists as too fantastic. The pother was extraordinary, considering the cause.

These early verses had no great depth of feeling. But after 1833, when he ran away to Venice with George Sand—or George Sand ran away with him—after their electric life and bitter parting, his whole nature seemed to change, to deepen. The passion of love, rage, and jealousy, the flash and outbreak of a fiery mind, seemed to rend his very soul like devils. He set himself, like Byron still, to move the pity of the world with “the pageant of his bleeding heart.” The most cruel of his love-pangs were beyond singing : “If I tried them on my lyre,” he tells us, “they would break it like a reed.” But he allowed himself to listen to milder invitations of the Muse.

Such lines as those from *A Night of May*, in which every piece of imagery is penetrated with the power of charm, of the mystery of romance, are alone sufficient to display the whole gift of de Musset at its best. It is a gift of pure enchantment. Some of his lesser songs are also gems of purest beauty. Here is one, of which some glimmer may perhaps shine through the veil of a translation :

Remember, when the Dawn throws open wide  
Her grand enchanted palace to the Sun ;  
Remember, when the Night, the pensive-eyed,  
Comes dreaming under veils all silver-spun ;  
When thy bosom beats high with a pleasure supreme,  
When twilight allures thee to brood and to dream,  
Hark ! The forest profound  
Has a voice in its sound—  
“Remember !”

Remember me, when, nevermore distressed,  
This heart of mine shall slumber in the tomb ;  
Remember, when above its house of rest  
Softly a solitary flower shall bloom.  
Thou wilt see me no more, but my spirit shall be,  
Like a sister beloved, for ever with thee.  
When the midnight is nigh  
Thou shalt hear a voice sigh,  
“Remember !”



But de Musset was also a novelist (in the main autobiographical, as in *Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle*), and a most delightful writer of comedies—exquisite, moving, witty. What Chopin, his contemporary, was to music, de Musset was to poetry and drama. And, like de Vigny, he is one of the world's great letter-writers.

Senior to Alfred de Musset are Alfred de Vigny (1797–1863) and Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869). Lamartine was a facile, rather sentimental, rather superficial poet, but he was melodious, moving, and, whether in lyric, elegy, or verse-tale, extremely readable. After 1840, he became immersed in politics, in which he showed himself to be an idealistic, utopian patriot.

Alfred de Vigny was a greater man, a finer poet, a dramatist (for instance, *Chatterton*, 1835), a writer of powerful fiction (*Cinq-Mars*, a novel, 1826; *Grandeur et Servitude militaires*, middle-length stories), a more than competent translator (Shakespeare's *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*), and the author of the remarkable *Journal d'un Poète*, which was not published until four years after his death. His two most noteworthy volumes of verse are *Poems Ancient and Modern*, 1826, and *The Destinies*, 1863, although many of them had, in the 1840's, appeared in the conservative, influential *Revue des Deux Mondes*. In his poetry as in his character, Vigny was quite as much a classic as he was a romantic: he possessed artistic restraint and an austere grandeur. Except in the pure lyric, he was a greater poet, and in his prose he was, though less dramatic and picturesque, a more lastingly eloquent writer than his younger contemporary, Hugo. But he did not wield Hugo's immense influence.

Far more thoroughgoingly romantic was Gérard de Nerval (1808–1855), the writer of delicate, musical, mystical prose and verse; his is haunting poetry, and his was a haunted, unhappy life, ended by a lamp-post self-hanging. The very quintessence of poetry renders his verse unforgettable; this quality pervades his extremely fine translation of Goethe's *Faust*.

## § 7

Théophile Gautier was born at Tarbes in 1811, but came to Paris early. There he started life in a garret, and spent his days in the picture-galleries, where he would sit for hours, entranced and motionless, before a painting or a statue, feeding his soul with the beauty of colour and of form. Beauty-worship was with him a sole consuming passion, indeed a kind of monomania. Alfred de Musset, a lovesick angel, singing songs of passion infinitely sweet and bitter, could lose his heart to a plain woman like George Sand. Now, it is very certain that Gautier, who looked upon a woman

as a breathing statue, could never have fallen in love with one of them whose knees were not clean-cut.

Urged by this rage for plastic beauty he resolved at first to be a painter. But his dreams of loveliness refused to body forth upon the canvas. He threw away his brushes and turned to the other art of words, in which he was destined to become one of the supreme masters of the world. While he earned his living by a sort of inspired journalism, he was bringing into being poems and romances of which every line is like a brush-stroke on a painting or a chisel-touch upon a statue. It may be said, in passing, that the most picturesque of poets was also one of the most picturesque of men. Tall, massive, with a head like Jupiter's, majestic and yet kindly, with his love-locks streaming down his back, strolling down the boulevards in yellow slippers and black velvet vest, his bare head shadowed by a parasol, he was a spectacle to fill the eye.

His ideals in art, whether poetry or painting, were entirely Greek. As he himself said, in a fine passage on Greek art, which will serve us also as an excellent example of his style :

It prefers a statue to a phantom, and full moon to twilight. Free from mist and vapour, admitting nothing visionary or uncertain, its least details stand out sharply, strong in form and colour. Its dreams are of long cavalcades of milk-white steeds, ridden by lovely naked youths, defiling past against a ground of azure, as upon the friezes of the Parthenon—or of processions of young girls, crowned with garlands and apparelled in strait tunics, bearing in their hands their ivory timbrels, and seeming as if they moved round an enormous urn. The mountains of its landscape rises up sharp-edged against the sky, the sun reposing on the loftiest peaks, and opening wide, like a resting lion, his golden-lidded eye. Its clouds are shaped and cut, like marble splinters. Its streams fall in sculptured waves from the mouths of sculptured urns. Its shadows gather, dark-massed, beneath its trees. Between its tall reeds, green and vocal as those of Eurotas, glance the round and silvery flanks of a green-haired naiad ; or between its sombre oaks Diana passes with arrow-sheaf and flying scarf, followed by her nymphs and yelping hounds.

It was Swinburne who, in a happy phrase, spoke of Gautier's "clean chryselephantine verse"—referring to the gold and ivory in which the great Greek sculptors wrought their statues of the gods. It is to Swinburne also that we owe a paraphrase of one of Gautier's songs, which, in its capture of the very style and spirit of the lines, could only be achieved by as great a poet as the author :

We are in Love's land to-day ;  
Where shall we go ?  
Love, shall we start or stay,  
Or shall we row ? . . .



These verses are from *Enamels and Cameos* (1852—enlarged edition, 1872), the volume which contains the finest of all Gautier's poems. Many of these have taken rank among the treasures of French poetry—for example, *A Symphony in White Major* and *Art*. In the first of these he set himself to write a poem in which everything is white, just as Keats wrote a sonnet on the colour blue. It is a portrait of a lady, robed in white, her bosom whiter than its white camellias, even as the naked forms of the swan-maidens in the fairy story were whiter than the feathers they threw off to bathe—whiter than a glacier in the moonlight, than the silver of a lily-petal, the frost-flowers on the pane, the icicle that glimmers in a cavern, the sphinx that Winter carves out of the Alpine snow. So she sits at her piano, her hands whiter than the ivory keys. Icy-hearted, implacable in whiteness, when shall a lover flush her into rose?

*Art* is Gautier's creed. Verse of the strictest form and finish is alone eternal, just as a profile of Apollo is of finer and more lasting beauty cut in agate than in clay. The carven bust survives the city, the coin a labourer turns up reveals a time-forgotten emperor, a gem of verse is more immortal than the gods.

Sculpte, lime, cisèle ;  
Que ton rêve flottant  
Se scelle  
Dans le bloc résistant !

It was in the resisting block of chiselled verse that Gautier sealed his dreams.

Besides being a poet, Gautier was a first-class critic of art and literature, and the author of some extremely talented *contes* (middle-length stories) and two notable novels—*Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835) and *Captain Fracasse* (1863).

He died in the year 1872.

## § 8

Charles-Marie-René Leconte de Lisle was born in 1818 at St. Paul, Réunion Island, and made several voyages before he came to Paris at the age of twenty-nine. He was a fine scholar, a great student and translator of the classics, and his first volume of poetry, *Antique Poems* (1852), depicted, very much in the manner of Gautier, the figures and scenes of ancient Greece. But he was a child of the tropics; his own peculiar regions were not classic, but barbaric; and *Barbaric Poems* (1862) was in fact the title of his next volume. The wild and solitary places of the world are his peculiar ground. He loves the rich and coloured East, with all its pictures, from the oasis where the

Bedouin ties his mare beneath the solitary date-palm, to the verandah with the silver trellis and the scarlet cushions where the Persian beauty, lulled by the music of the porphyry fountains, watches the blue smoke of her hookah in the jasmin-scented air. He knows the desert where the herds of elephants pass ghost-like in the moonlight, and the glade of jungle where the jaguar rests at noon. He has beheld upon its rock the black tower of Runoia amidst the everlasting Polar snows. He has marked the priest of Brahma, with the girdle of white muslin round his loins of amber, sitting cross-armed in trance beneath his fig-tree. He has watched the condor float above the peaks of Chimborazo. He has entered the cavern where the huddled cubs of the black panther mew among the shining bones. In *Tragic Poems* (1884) there is a deeper note.

Leconte de Lisle is famous for his study of wild animals. Here is a picture of a tiger—a piece well known to his admirers :

Under the tall dry grass, where the rosy naja-blossom unfolds in its golden spiral to the sun, the formidable beast, the dweller of the jungles, sleeps upon his back with claws dilating. Out of his striped jaws his hot breath smokes and his rough red tongue is lolling. Round his repose all noise is stilled ; the pantheress crawls, with arched back, on the watch ; the sinewy python with the scales of agate thrusts his flat head from below the prickly nopals ; and where his flight has made a glittering circle in the air the cantharides darts to and fro around the broad-striped king.

From this picture of the noonday jungle the poem changes, like a scene on a dissolving view, to the same at twilight. The air grows chill and stirs the grass-tops ; the tiger awakens, lifts his head, and listens for the tread of the gazelles, if any chance to seek the hidden brooklet where the bamboos lean above the lotus-blossoms. But no sound is in the air ; and rising from the grass with stretching jaws, he sends a melancholy growl into the night.

As a study of what we may call the picturesquely horrible there are few more striking pictures than that of the Brahman hermit in the long poem *Cunacépa*—a splendid specimen of narrative verse. To read it is to see the holy man in person, sitting in silence, like a rough-hewn idol—his glittering hollow eyes, his limbs like iron bars, his nails that curve into the flesh, his hair, a mass of filth and brambles, falling to his knees. The manner in which this story is related is rich and vivid beyond all description.

Leconte de Lisle does not often seek variety of metre. The grand and splendid Alexandrine seems his natural measure. But sometimes he works in shorter lines, and with the happiest effect. In the last of the three studies called *Les Clairs de Lune*, there is an exquisite example. The poem is a sea-scene ; it represents an ocean at the hour of twilight, grey, calm, and



vast, beneath a starless sky. Very gradually, towards the East, a white light breaks the mist above the sea-line :

Un feu pâle luit et déferle,  
La mer frémit, s'ouvre un moment,  
Et, dans le ciel couleur de perle,  
La lune monte lentement.

The line, for all its mellow intonation, compels itself to be read slowly, in correspondence with the slowly dawning moon.

Leconte de Lisle died in 1894.

## § 9

Charles Baudelaire, born in Paris, 1821—he died in 1867—was a rich man and able to devote his life to poetry. Yet nearly all his poems are contained within a single volume, bearing the apt title of *The Flowers of Evil* (1857). He was neither a painter-poet nor a seeker after things of beauty. He preferred a black Venus to a white one. A slum-girl, with her sickly freckled body peeping through her tatters, “had her sweetness.” He was a great student of De Quincey, and in truth the perfume of these *Flowers of Evil* has something of the scent of opium. His poetry is full of images of ugliness and horror, of the haggard spectres of insomnia, of the terror that walks by night, of the phantom forms that haunt the darkest caverns of the soul. When he attempts a picture the result has no resemblance to nature. Thus, in *A Dream of Paris*, we have a city built of metal and of marble, rigid, polished, with colossal palaces and colonnades. Babel towers and terraces, shining by their own strange light, cascades that fall like crystal curtains, while stretches of blue waters, like steel mirrors, reflecting giant water-maidens, glimmer under bridges built of jewels, or by the side of quays of lucid porphyry. In the phrase of Gautier, “the very style of the whole poem seems to glitter like black marble.”

He was, beyond all others, the poet, not of pictures but of perfumes. He had, in early youth, made a voyage to the islands of the Indian Ocean, where the scents and savours of the tropics, amber, spikenard, incense, seem to have soaked into his being. “My soul floats on perfumes,” he said himself, “as the souls of other men on music.” He compared his work to an old flagon covered with cobwebs in a cupboard in a deserted house. The cupboard, opened, sends forth a faint scent of musk and lavender, of robes and laces, powder-boxes, souvenirs of ancient loves and times—but from the antique flagon comes a perfume sharp and strange which the world has never known before.

Baudelaire was also a master of poetic prose : witness his *Poems in Prose* (1868).

## § 10

Verlaine may justly be described as the most singular individual who ever gained a poet's fame. So ugly that women cried out in terror at the sight of him as if face to face with a baboon, steeped to the lips in absinthe, at one time in jail for shooting a friend, and at another for assaulting his mother, dying at last in a garret, a wreck in body and soul, this wild being yet produced a long series of poems which, in their utter simplicity of beauty, seem made for an angel of heaven to murmur to his harp.

He was born in 1844 at Metz, but lived in Paris, where he died in 1896. He inherited a little money, which was fortunate, for his poems, for many years, were printed at his own expense. They appeared in a succession of tiny volumes: the first under the title of *Saturnian Poems* (1866)—poems born under Saturn, the melancholy star. But theirs is a melancholy sweet and charming. Very typical, for example, is the sonnet *After Three Years*. It tells how he pushed back the broken gate and walked into the little garden. Nothing had changed. The same calm sunlight set in every flower a dewy sparkle. Above the rustic seat the wild-vine trellis still hung in veils of shadowy green. The fountain still kept up its silvery murmur and the ancient aspen whispered its eternal sighs. As of old, the roses, the tall lilies, rocked in air. It seemed as if it were the same lark singing. Even the antique statue, scaling flakes of plaster, stood unaltered, amid the faint sweet plots of mignonette.

In his next volume, *Fêtes Galantes* (1869), he is, for the time being, in another world—a world like that of Watteau's pictures, where lords and ladies, with their masks and mandolines, black pages and tame monkeys, mix with harlequins and columbines, among clipped yews and marble statues by the side of moonlit fountains. But this is not his own true world at all. His real themes were the joys and sorrows of his own strange soul. But whatever he expresses—hymns, love-songs, drinking-catches—his thoughts in hospital, in jail—his sins, his follies, or his dreams—all were uttered in a verse of music as sweet and simple as an aria of Mozart. But the moment a translator lays a finger on it the whole charm is broken, "like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh."

O triste, triste était mon âme  
A cause, à cause d'une femme.

"My soul was sad for the sake of a woman"—that is all the *theme* of these two lines. But where is the music, the magic, which will not let them be forgotten?



Let us take another lyric. "The sky above the roof is calm and blue—a tree is rocking—a spire against the sky is softly chiming—a plaintive bird is singing—from the city comes a peaceful murmur—life there is simple, tranquil. You, who go by weeping, what have you done with your youth?"

Such is the theme—in prose. And now for the transfiguring verse :

Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit,  
Si bleu, si calme !  
Un arbre, par-dessus le toit,  
Berce sa palme.

La cloche dans le ciel qu'on voit  
Doucement tinte.  
Un oiseau sur l'arbre qu'on voit  
Chante sa plainte.

Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, la vie est là,  
Simple et tranquille.  
Cette paisible rumeur-là  
Vient de la ville.

—Qu'as-tu fait, ô toi que voilà  
Pleurant sans cesse,  
Dis, qu'as-tu fait, toi qui voilà,  
De ta jeunesse ?"

A slightly younger contemporary of Verlaine is Arthur Rimbaud (1854–1891). This lesser poet had, like Verlaine, an unhappy, irregular life ; like him, he belonged to the symbolist group of poets, of which perhaps the most remarkable member is Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898), more intellectual than Verlaine and Rimbaud ; more regular in his life ; more philosophical and deliberate. Mallarmé's most famous work is *The Afternoon of a Faun* (1876).

If Mallarmé was preoccupied with style, so too were, in their different ways, Sully Prudhomme (1839–1907) and J. M. de Heredia (1842–1905). The former was a very distinguished member of the Parnassian group, which aimed at a reaction against the loose versification of many disciples of the Lamartine-Hugo methods of prosody : the Parnassians descended from the post-1840 Gautier and, still more, from Leconte de Lisle. Sully Prudhomme may be described as a philosophical, sentimental, melancholy, mildly pessimistic explorer of the human heart and soul, whereas de Heredia is a sonneteer combining barbaric splendour and colour with stylistic restraint.

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THÉOPHILE GAUTIER :

*Mademoiselle de Maupin* (Lane), *The Mummy's Romance* (Hudson).

BAUDELAIRE :

*Poems in Prose* (Elkin Mathews) and *Flowers of Evil* (A. Hamilton).

*Poems* in the Canterbury Poets Series (Walter Scott).

Arthur Symons's *Baudelaire*, a study (Elkin Mathews).

VERLAINE :

*Poems* in the Canterbury Poets Series (Walter Scott).

E. Lepelletier's *P. Verlaine, his Life and his Work* (T. Werner Laurie, 1909).

Harold Nicolson, *Paul Verlaine* (Constable).

Dorothy Martin, *Sextette* : Verse renderings of six French poets of the Symbolist group (Scholartis Press).

*French Short Stories* : in Everyman's Library, a collection of 19th and 20th Century tales ; in the World's Classics, one of 18th to 20th Century tales.

*Modern French Literature, 1870-1940*, by Denis Saurat, is a brilliant, if over-critical, study (Dent).

## XXXIV

### THE GREAT VICTORIANS

CARLYLE, MACAULAY, RUSKIN

#### § 1

CARLYLE was a Puritan, and if he were not a Puritan he was nothing. He was as Puritan as Cromwell and as Bunyan, and far more Puritan than Milton. He abandoned the letter of the faith in which he was brought up, but he taught what Froude has called "Calvinism without the theology." English Puritanism was to him "the last of our heroisms." In writing of the "hero as priest," he took Luther and John Knox as his subjects, and the practices of Catholicism were sneered at by him as "Puseyisms and other such ghosts and apparitions in winding sheets."

Thomas Carlyle was born at Ecclefechan, near Dumfries, on December 4, 1795. His father, James Carlyle, was a working mason, and Thomas was the eldest of a family of nine children. His parents were both persons of strong character. He was first sent to the village school and afterwards to a grammar school, and as he was evidently a boy of unusual ability his father decided that he should go to Edinburgh University to be prepared for the Presbyterian ministry. Carlyle walked to Edinburgh, a distance of about eighty miles, and arrived there about a month before his fifteenth birthday. In the usual manner of the poor Scots student Carlyle earned his living as a teacher while he was pursuing his divinity course. In 1817 he decided that it was impossible for him to be a minister. In the years that followed Carlyle wrote odd articles, almost starved, and incidentally learned German, perhaps the most significant happening of his early life. Goethe and Jean Paul Richter opened a new world for him, and from them he learned the excessive Teutonism which modelled his style as a writer, and fundamentally influenced him as a thinker.

In 1822 Carlyle came to London as tutor to the sons of a rich Anglo-Indian. In 1825 he met Jane Baillie Welsh, whom he married in the following year. After his marriage, Carlyle lived for a while in Edinburgh writing critical essays, the most memorable of which was his essay on Burns. The Carlyles were very poor, and in 1834 they decided to try their fortune in London. They took up their residence at 5 Cheyne Row, Chelsea, where Carlyle spent the rest of his life. His *French Revolution*



was published in 1837; *Sartor Resartus*, which had appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* before he left Scotland, was published as a book in 1838; *Heroes and Hero Worship* in 1841, *Past and Present* in 1843, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* in 1845, *Latter Day Pamphlets* in 1850, and the *History of Frederick the Great* from 1858 to 1865. Carlyle died in Cheyne Row on February 5, 1881, and was buried among his own people at Ecclefechan.

Perhaps the greatest misfortune of Carlyle's life was his friendship with J. A. Froude, whom he made his literary executor, and who published his *Reminiscences* after his death, a book good enough to read, but which bristles with harsh judgments on contemporaries, far more damaging to the author's reputation than to the reputations of the men with whom he dealt. Some years later Froude published, with doubtful propriety, letters of Mrs. Carlyle. There is no reason why the world should be admitted behind the screen that hides the intimacies of domestic life. Carlyle was a hard man to live with. His wife was gently bred. He remained a peasant. He was a chronic dyspeptic, ill-tempered, given to grumbling and nagging. An estrangement occurred between Carlyle and his wife after they had been married many years, but, quick-tempered and sharp-tongued, she was yet proud of him and certainly patient and thrifty and loyal, while he was almost pathetically dependent on her, always consulting her and grumbly taking her advice. Carlyle was a literary genius. There are probably few women less to be envied than the wives of literary geniuses, and it is best to leave it at that.

In the history of literature there are no writers to whom Carlyle can be said to have so much affinity as the Hebrew Prophets. He was a modern Jeremiah, and much of his writing can be described as nineteenth-century "Lamentations." His philosophy has been summarised by the late W. S. Lilly :

He divided mankind into two classes—the wise few, and the unwise many who have men's susceptibilities, appetites, and capabilities, but not the insights and higher virtues of men. And not the unwise many, but the wise few, he taught, were the rightful rulers, the divinely appointed guides of mankind. This is, in substance, his doctrine of great men. To the cult of majorities he opposed the cult of superiorities; to the rule of the multitude, the necessity of loyalty and obedience. Carlyle conceived of a hero as a man who has received a divine mission and who triumphantly carries it out, at all perils; whether in captivity, like Moses; in the cloister, like Abbot Samson; on the field of battle, like Cromwell.

Writing of John Knox and his heroes and hero-worship, Carlyle is brave enough to defend intolerance. He says :

Tolerance has to tolerate the unessential; and to see well what that is. Tolerance has to be noble, measured, just in its very wrath, when it can tolerate no



longer. But, on the whole, we are not altogether here to tolerate. We are here to resist, to control, and to vanquish withal. We do not tolerate Falsehoods, Iniquities when they fasten on us ; we say to them, Thou art false and unjust, We are here to extinguish Falsehoods and put an end to them in some wise way.

The Carlylean hero-worship is an anticipation of the doctrine of the superman preached by Gobineau and Nietzsche. It is the antithesis of democracy. Carlyle hated cruelty and injustice as much as he hated hypocrisy and shams. He sympathised with the weak and the unfortunate. But his sympathy was always patronising, for to him his fellows were "mostly fools." He had many friends, though it may be suggested that friendship for him was never deep, and that his acquaintances tolerated his ill-manners for the sake of his genius. Emerson, Tennyson, and John Stuart Mill were more or less intimate with him. He appreciated Dickens, but he cared neither for Scott nor for Keats nor for Charles Lamb. How the gentle Elia must have been terrorised by the disgruntled dyspeptic Scotsman ! To him Heine was nothing but a blackguard, and he sneeringly referred to Coleridge as a "puffy, anxious, abstracted-looking, fattish old man." The tragedy of expecting the world to be saved by heroes and supermen is that they are both hard to find, and that in searching for the hero we are apt to miss the heroic in the commonplace.

He had a consuming hatred of all shams and cant of every kind, and his unfortunate tendency to find "shams" was a weakness in his character. In a famous sketch of Mirabeau he wrote :

Honour to the strong man, in these ages, who has shaken himself loose of shams, and is something. For in the way of being *worthy*, the first condition surely is that one *be*. Let Cant cease, at all risks and at all costs : till Cant cease, nothing else can begin. Of human Criminals, in these centuries, writes the Moralist, I find but one forgivable : the Quack. "Hateful to God," as divine Dante sings, "and to the enemies of God :

"A Dio spiacente ed a' nemici sui !"

But whoever will, with sympathy, which is the first essential towards insight, look at this questionable Mirabeau, may find that there lay verily in him, as the basis of all, a Sincerity, a great free Earnestness ; nay, call it Honesty, for the man did before all things see, with that clear flashing vision, into what *was*, into what existed as fact ; and did, with his wild heart, follow that and no other. Whereby on what ways soever he travels and struggles, often enough falling, he is still a brother man. Hate him not ; thou canst not hate him ! Shining through such soil and tarnish, and now victorious effulgent, and oftenest struggling eclipsed, the light of genius itself is in this man ; which was never yet base and hateful ; but at worst was lamentable, lovable with pity. They say that he was ambitious that he wanted to be Minister. It was most true. And was he not simply the one man in France who could have done any good as Minister ? Not vanity alone, not pride alone ; far from that ! Wild burstings of affection were in this great heart ; of fierce lightning, and soft dew of pity.



Carlyle preached the doctrine of work. "Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness." He prophesied the arrival of a day when the man with no work to do "will not find it good to shew himself in our corner of the solar system." Efficient work means discipline, and Carlyle, always a Prussian at heart, was in favour of compulsory military service, not only as protection, but as national training. One does not begin to understand Carlyle without keeping in mind that in culture and in prejudice he was emphatically German. He was decidedly the spiritual child of Germany, learned, indefatigable, deep-thinking Germany.

Victorian England was definitely pro-German. This was, of course, largely due to the influence of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort. But it was also largely due to Carlyle, whose influence on his contemporaries was greater than that of any other Victorian writer. Ruskin was his pupil, and every thinking young man came under his influence. The great writer has an enormous influence on the trend of history, and Carlyle is unquestionably one of the key figures of the nineteenth century. As G. K. Chesterton has said: "He told Englishmen that they were Teutons, that they were Viking, that they were practical politicians—all the things they like to be told they are, all the things that they are not." It was a failing of Carlyle that he took things too terribly in earnest, yet his bitterness and ferocity are but tokens of the strength of his sympathies.

Carlyle's style was all his own. The great artist who has really something to say invariably invents the best possible way of saying it. Carlyle wrote in an English that no other man has ever written—a Teutonised English, an English that he learned from the Germans. But he could have expressed himself in no other language.

George Saintsbury has described his style thus :

Its characteristics, like those of nearly all great styles, are partly obvious, partly recondite, or altogether fugitive, even from the most acute and persevering investigation. In the lowest place come the mechanical devices of capitals—a revival, of course, of an old habit—italics, dashes, and other resources to the assistance of the printer. Next may be ranked certain stenographic tricks as regards grammar—the omission of conjunctions, pronouns, and generally all parts of speech which, by relying strictly on the reader's ability to perceive the meaning without them, can be omitted, and the omission of which gives point and freshness to the whole and emphasises those words which are left. Next and higher come exotic, and specially German, constructions, long compound adjectives, unusual comparatives and superlatives like "beautifuller," unsparing employment of that specially English idiom by which, as it has been hyperbolically said, every verb can be made a noun and every noun a verb, together with a certain, though not very large, admixture of actual neologisms and coinings like "Gigmanity." Farther still from the mechanical is the art of arrangement in



order of words and juxtaposition of clauses, cadence and rhythm of phrase, all of which go so far to make up style in the positive. And beyond these again comes the indefinable part, the part which always remains and defies analysis.

Considering him as a writer, Augustine Birrell says :

He resembles one of his native streams, pent in at times between huge rocks, and tormented into foam, and then effecting its escape down some precipice and spreading into cool expanses below ; but however varied may be its fortunes—however startling its changes—always in motion, always in harmony with the scene around. Is it gloomy ? It is with the gloom of the thunder-cloud. Is it bright ? It is with the radiance of the sun.

## § 2

*The French Revolution* is Carlyle's masterpiece. The story, vivid and dramatic, is told with a magnificent picturesqueness. Carlyle makes history a very live thing. He has a genius for character sketches. He makes his characters real with one vivid phrase. Robespierre, "the sea-green incorruptible" ; Danton, "a gigantic mass of valour" ; Barras, "a man of heat and haste" ; Marat (whom by the way he entirely misjudges), the "hapless squalid." There is perhaps no finer passage in the *French Revolution* than the end of the chapter in which Carlyle describes the murder of Marat by Charlotte Corday and her execution at the Place de la Révolution.

The history contains many splendid passages—the storming of the Bastille and the description of the unfortunate banquet at Versailles, for instance—but it has been charged with being at times a little unjust. Carlyle, says Saintsbury, "may almost be said to have been the first to present historic characters 'realised' after the fashion of the novelist, but with limitation to fact. In other words, he wrote history as Shakespeare long before and Scott in his own time wrote drama or romance, though he tasked his imagination not to create but to vivify and rearrange the particulars."

*The French Revolution* was written during the early days of Carlyle's residence in London, and was as he said his "last throw." He lent the manuscript of the first volume to Mill to read, and, without Carlyle's permission, he lent it to Mrs. Taylor, whom Carlyle has described as "pale and passionate and sad-looking, a living romance heroine, of the Royalist volition and questionable destiny." The manuscript was accidentally burned by Mrs. Taylor's servant ! Carlyle had kept no notes and could not recall a sentence that he had written, and he had to begin all over again. He always believed that the first version was the better, but Mrs. Carlyle





### GOING TO SEE GRANDMAMMA.

LITTLE Molly and Damon  
Are walking so far,  
For they're going to see  
Their kind Grandmamma.

And they very well know,  
When they get there she'll take  
From out of her cupboard  
Some very nice cake.

And into her garden  
They know they may run,  
And pick some red currants,  
And have lots of fun.

So Damon to doggie  
Says, "How do you do?"  
And asks his mamma  
If he may not go too.

FROM *MARIGOLD GARDEN*, BY KATE GREENAWAY

The quaint and delicate charm of Kate Greenaway's drawings for children establishes her among the greatest nineteenth century book illustrators.



*W. F. Mansell*

"HONORÉ DE BALZAC," AFTER A DRAWING BY L. BOULANGER

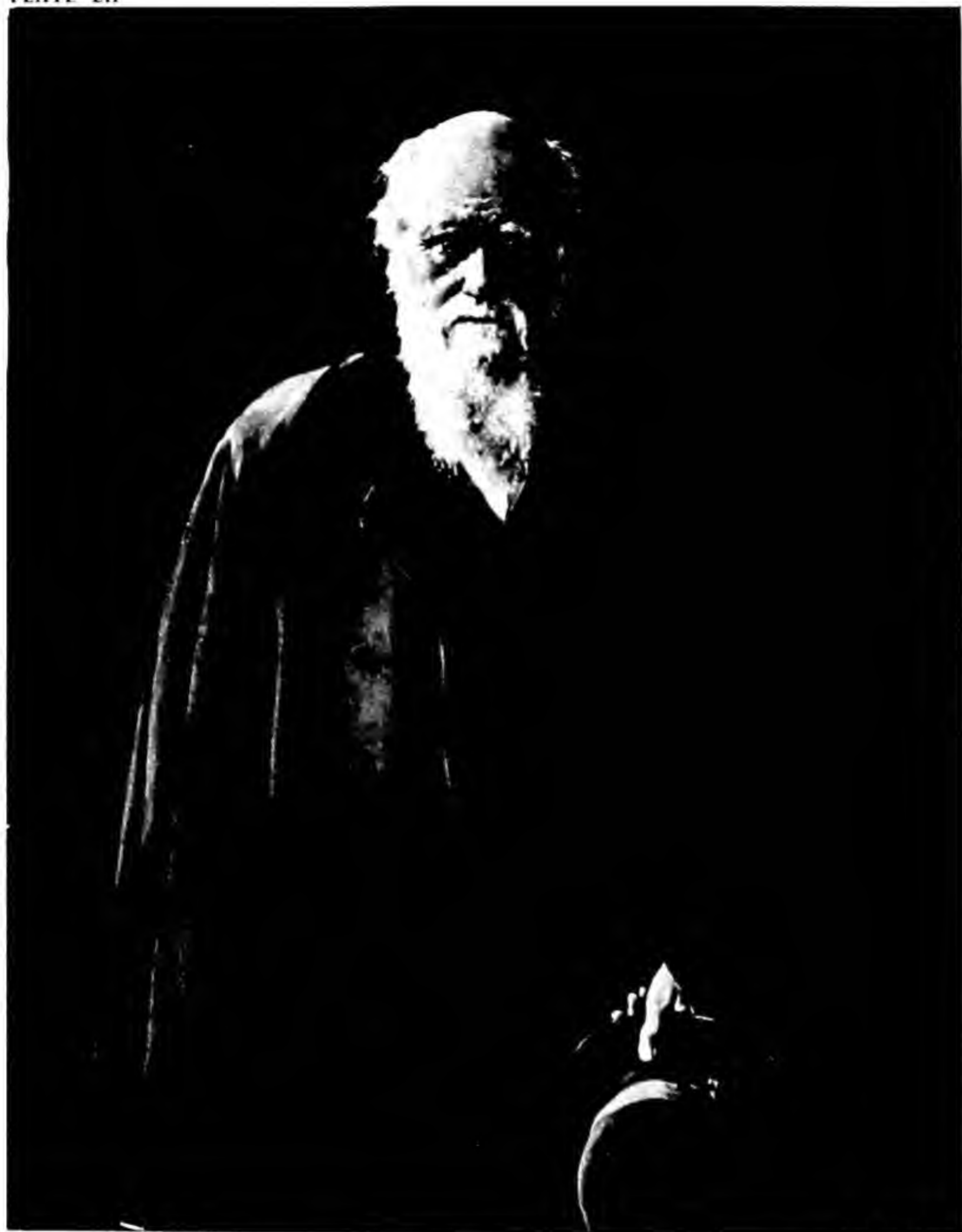
Part romanticist, part realist, Balzac is perhaps the greatest of French nineteenth-century novelists.





*Picture Post Library*

"THOMAS CARLYLE," BY JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER



W. F. Mansell

"CHARLES DARWIN," BY THE HON. JOHN COLLIER

Pre-eminent among Victorian scientists, his theories concerning the evolution of the human race are set out in his famous book, *The Origin of Species*.





*"I will go and reconnoitre the enemy"*

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Frank C. Papé's illustration perfectly matches Anatole France's powers of description—so vivid that the incidents he describes leap to life from the printed page.



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Rudyard Kipling's own illustration for "How the Camel Got His Hump."





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One of Claire Leighton's lovely wood engravings for the most idyllic of Thomas Hardy's novels.



*Reproduced by permission of Messrs. Cassell & Co. Ltd., from "Kidnapped."*

"THE KIDNAPPING OF DAVID BALFOUR," BY W. R. S. STOTT



preferred the second. "It is a little less vivacious," she said, "but better thought and put together."

It was Carlyle's special gift, as Froude says, "to bring dead things and dead people actually back to life; to make the past once more the present, and to show us men and women playing their parts on the mortal stage as real flesh-and-blood, human creatures, with every feature which he ascribes to them authenticated, not the most trifling incident invented, and yet as a result with figures as completely alive as Shakespeare's own."

Here was a new kind of history, a vivid, dramatic spectral thing of immense power embodying all the Carlylean doctrine.

"The style," wrote Froude, "which troubled others, and troubled himself when he thought about it, was perhaps the best possible to convey thoughts which were often like the spurting of volcanic fire; but it was inharmonious, rough-hewn, and savage."

A book written from such a point of view had no "public" prepared for it. When it appeared partisans on both sides were offended; and to the reading multitude who wish merely to be amused without the trouble of thinking, it had no attraction till they learned its merits from others. But to the chosen few, to those who had eyes of their own to see with, and manliness enough to recognise when a living man was speaking to them, to those who had real intellect, and could therefore acknowledge intellect, and welcome it, whether they agreed or not with the writer's opinions, the high quality of the *French Revolution* became apparent instantly, and Carlyle was at once looked up to, by some who themselves were looked up to by the world, as a man of extraordinary gifts; perhaps as the highest among them all. Dickens carried a copy of it with him wherever he went. Southey read it six times over. Thackeray reviewed it enthusiastically. Even Jeffrey generously admitted that Carlyle had succeeded upon lines on which he had himself foretold inevitable failure. The orthodox political philosophers, Macaulay, Hallam, Brougham, though they perceived that Carlyle's views were the condemnation of their own, though they felt instinctively that he was their most dangerous enemy, yet could not any longer despise him. They with the rest were obliged to admit that there had arisen a new star, of baleful perhaps and ominous aspect, but a star of the first magnitude in English literature.

Carlyle's *French Revolution* has been, of course, debated and criticised from every point of view. G. K. Chesterton, after describing Carlyle as one of the finest story-tellers in the world, sums up an opinion of the *French Revolution* in these words:

It never occurred to him sufficiently clearly to ask what place Shelley occupied in Shelley's *Cosmos*, or Robespierre in Robespierre's *Cosmos*. Not feeling the need of this, he never studied, he never really listened to Shelley's philosophy or Robespierre's philosophy. Here, after a somewhat long circuit, we have arrived at the one serious deficiency in Carlyle's histories, a neglect to realise the importance of theory and of alternative theories in human affairs. . . .



So far as it goes, this is perfectly true of the French Revolution ; but only so far as it goes. The French Revolution was a sudden starting from slumber of that terrible spirit of man which sleeps through the greater number of centuries ; and Carlyle appreciates this, and describes it more powerfully and fearfully than any human historian, because this idea of the spirit of man breaking through formulæ and building again on fundamentals was a part of his own philosophical theory, and therefore he understood it. But he never, as I have said, took any real trouble to understand other people's philosophical theories. And he did not realise the other fact about the French Revolution—the fact that it was not merely an elemental outbreak, but was also a great doctrinal movement. It is an astonishing thing that Carlyle's *French Revolution* contrives to be as admirable and as accurate a history as it is, while from one end to the other there is hardly a suggestion that he comprehended the moral and political theories which were the guiding stars of the French Revolutionists. It was not necessary that he should agree with them, but it was necessary that he should be interested in them ; nay, in order that he should write a perfect history of their developments, it was necessary that he should admire them. The truly impartial historian is not he who is enthusiastic for neither side in a historic struggle.

*Sartor Resartus* is in some respects the most Teutonic of all Carlyle's writing. Under the form of a dissertation on Clothes by a learned and eccentric German professor, Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, Carlyle hews and hammers out his gospel of work, endurance, and contempt for what men call happiness as distinct from the "blessedness" which is the reward of truth-seeking and duty done. The style is a dialect which only Carlyle could have invented and which no writer can safely imitate ; it is purely his own, and it has been truly said that in no other could he have delivered his message. The book contains passages of sombre splendour that are almost unrivalled in modern prose. Such a one is the magnificent description of Night, in the third chapter, which follows :

"*Ach, mein Lieber !*" he said once, at midnight, when we had returned from the Coffee-house in rather earnest talk, "it is a true sublimity to dwell here. These fringes of lamplight, struggling up through smoke and thousandfold exhalation, some fathoms into the ancient reign of Night, what thinks Boötes of them, as he leads his Hunting-Dogs over the Zenith in their leash of sidereal fire ? That stifled hum of Midnight, when Traffic has lain down to rest ; and the chariot-wheels of Vanity, still rolling here and there through distant streets, are bearing her to Halls roofed-in, and lighted to the due pitch for her ; and only Vice and Misery, to prowl or to moan like night-birds, are abroad : that hum, I say, like the stertorous, unquiet slumber of sick Life, is heard in Heaven ! Oh, under that hideous coverlet of vapours, and putrefactions, and unimaginable gases, what a Fermenting-vat lies simmering and hid ! The joyful and the sorrowful are there ; men are dying there, men are being born ; men are praying,—on the other side of a brick partition, men are cursing ; and around them all is the vast, void Night. The proud Grandee still lingers in his perfumed saloons, or reposes within damask curtains ; Wretchedness cowers into truckle-beds, or



shivers hunger-stricken into its lair of straw ; in obscure cellars, *Rouge-et-Noir* languidly emits its voice-of-destiny to haggard hungry Villains ; while Councillors of State sit plotting, and playing their high chess-game, whereof the pawns are Men. The Lover whispers his mistress that the coach is ready ; and she, full of hope and fear, glides down, to fly with him over the borders : the Thief, still more silently, sets-to his picklocks and crowbars, or lurks in wait till the watchmen first snore in their boxes. Gay mansions, with supper-rooms and dancing-rooms, are full of light and music and high-swelling hearts ; but, in the Condemned Cells, the pulse of life beats tremulous and faint, and bloodshot eyes look out through the darkness, which is around and within, for the light of a stern last morning. Six men are to be hanged on the morrow : comes no hammering from the *Rabenstein* ?—their gallows must even now be o' building. Upwards of five-hundred-thousand two-legged animals without feathers lie round us in horizontal positions ; their heads all in nightcaps and full of the foolishlest dreams. Riot cries aloud, and staggers and swaggers in his rank dens of shame ; and the Mother, with streaming hair, kneels over her pallid dying infant, whose cracked lips only her tears now moisten.—All these heaped and huddled together with nothing but a little carpentry and masonry between them ;—crammed in, like salted fish in their barrel ;—or weltering, shall I say, like an Egyptian pitcher of tamed vipers, each struggling to get its head above the others ; such work goes on under that smoke-counterpane !—but I, *mein Werther*, sit above it all ; I am alone with the Stars.”

In *Past and Present* Carlyle writes of the seventeenth century—of which he gives us a wonderfully imaginative picture—much as William Morris wrote about the Middle Ages. To him it was the golden age. “It was the last glimpse of it in our world this of English Puritanism, very great, very glorious, tragical enough to all thinking hearts that look on it from these days of ours.” His worship of the Puritan spirit, his belief that salvation can only come through a return to stern disciplined Puritanism, is finely expressed in the last passage of his *Cromwell's Letters* :

Oliver is gone ; and with him England's Puritanism, laboriously built together by this man, and made a thing far-shining, miraculous to its own Century, and memorable to all the Centuries, soon goes. Puritanism, without its King, is *kingless*, anarchic ; falls into dislocation, self-collision ; staggers, plunges into ever deep anarchy ; King, Defender of the Puritan Earth there can now none be found ; and nothing is left but to recall the old disowned Defender, with the remnants of his Four Surplices, and two Centuries of *Hypocrisia*, and put up with all that, the best we may. The Genius of England no longer soars Sunward, world-defiant, like an eagle through the storms, “mewing her mighty youth,” as John Milton saw her do : the Genius of England, much liker a greedy Ostrich intent on provender and a whole skin mainly, stands with its *other* extremity Sunward ; with its Ostrich-head stuck into the readiest bush, of old Church-tippets, King-cloaks, or what other “sheltering Fallacy” there may be, and so awaits the issue. The issue has been slow ; but it is now seen to have been inevitable. No ostrich, intent on gross terrene provender, and sticking its head into Fallacies, but will be awakened one day,—in a terrible *a-posteriori* manner,



if not otherwise !—Awake before it come to that : gods and men bid us awake ! The Voices of our Fathers, with thousandfold stern monition to one and all, bid us awake.

Carlyle's *Frederick the Great* is a most remarkable book. It is written with extreme wit. But because he was a German and a Prussian and a martinet, Carlyle, who admired such people, exalts one of the greatest scoundrels in history into a hero.

Carlyle had a poor opinion, Froude tells us, of Science—"Facts of all kinds were sacred to him"; love of Truth and love of Righteousness were his passion. Yet with his evangelical training and his deep-rooted conviction of the truth of the fundamentals of Victorian faith he watched with almost dismay the controversy that centred round the "Darwin theories" of the transmutation of species. "He fought against it," says Froude, "though I could see he dreaded that it might turn out true."

Indeed, Carlyle was impatient. He lost his orthodox faith, but he had no sympathy with heretics or with liberal theologians. "There goes Stanley," he said one day, Froude relates, as he passed the Dean in the park, "boring holes in the bottom of the Church of England."

Carlyle's gospel, and, not less, his manner of uttering it, have always affected different minds differently. His law, it has been justly said, was ever that of Sinai, not of the Mount of Beatitudes. "In his Bible there was no New Testament." He has been compared, indeed, to "a Calvinist who had lost his creed." Kingsley compares him to an old Hebrew prophet who goes to prince and beggar, saying, "If you do not do this or that you will go to Hell, not the hell the priests talk of—but a hell on this earth." Ruskin was deeply influenced by Carlyle and acknowledged that his strong thinking had deeply coloured his own, but he could summarise his prophetic character only by saying that "he lived in the clouds and was struck by lightning." In Carlylism the late Lord Morley saw Byronism turned more masculine: "it is Byronism with thew and sinew, bass pipe and shaggy bosom."

### § 3

Macaulay is the most popular of all English historians, and he owes his popularity to the clearness of his style and the conviction with which, as his critics might suggest, he twists fact to prove the justness of his opinions.

Macaulay was born in 1800. He was brought up in a rigid evangelical household, being the son of Zachary Macaulay, so justly remembered for his efforts to free the slaves. After a period of study at various private schools, young Macaulay entered Trinity College, Cambridge. He was no mathematician, but in classics he won the highest distinction, and duly



became a Fellow of his college. He was called to the Bar, but never seriously sought to practise, preferring a life devoted to literature and politics. His career was simply a series of triumphs. At the age of twenty-five, he began his lifelong connection with the *Edinburgh Review*, with his essay on Milton. In 1830 he entered Parliament, where he immediately won fame by his orations in support of the Reform Bill. As a reward for his political services he was appointed Judicial Member of the Indian Supreme Council, and from 1834 until 1838 he resided in India. On his return he re-entered Parliament, and held two Cabinet offices in succession. In 1857 he was raised to the peerage. He died in 1859.

It is humanly impossible for any man to write history impartially. The presentation of facts must be coloured by the opinions of the writer. And it is Macaulay's virtue that he never pretends to be anything but a partisan. He was a Whig. To him the revolution that cost James II his crown and made Dutch William king of England was the most beneficent event in our history, and his *History of England*, which begins with the accession of James II and was never finished, is one long belauding of the political principles of the historian. Macaulay's honesty is obvious. He has no use for half tones, for casuistry, or for speculation. To him the good was very very good and the naughty was horrid. So vigorous a partisan is an unreliable guide but an inspiring companion, and there is no question that his *History* is pre-eminently and sometimes excitingly readable. The incidental reflections are often sage and suggestive. The following passage is typical. In reading it one should remember that Macaulay had experience of a dominant race in India.

The member of a dominant race is, in his dealings with the subject race, seldom indeed fraudulent,—for fraud is the resource of the weak,—but imperious, insolent, and cruel. Towards his brethren, on the other hand, his conduct is generally just, kind, and even noble. His self-respect leads him to respect all who belong to his own order. His interest impels him to cultivate a good understanding with those whose prompt, strenuous, and courageous assistance may at any moment be necessary to preserve his property and life. It is a truth ever present to his mind that his own well-being depends on the ascendancy of the class to which he belongs. His very selfishness therefore is sublimed into public spirit: and this public spirit is stimulated to fierce enthusiasm by sympathy, by the desire of applause, and by the dread of infamy. For the only opinion which he values is the opinion of his fellows; and in their opinion devotion to the common cause is the most sacred of duties. The character, thus formed, has two aspects. Seen on one side, it must be regarded by every well-constituted mind with disapprobation. Seen on the other, it irresistibly extorts applause. The Spartan, smiting and spurning the wretched Helot, moves our disgust. But the same Spartan, calmly dressing his hair, and uttering his concise jests, on what he well knows to be his last day, in the pass of Thermopylæ, is not to be contemplated



without admiration. To a superficial observer it may seem strange that so much evil and so much good should be found together. But in truth the good and the evil, which at first sight appear almost incompatible, are closely connected, and have a common origin. It was because the Spartan had been taught to revere himself as one of a race of sovereigns, and to look down on all that was not Spartan as of an inferior species, that he had no fellow-feeling for the miserable serfs who crouched before him, and that the thought of submitting to a foreign master, or of turning his back before an enemy, never, even in the last extremity, crossed his mind.

As an essayist Macaulay is supremely great, and the *Essays* are among the half-dozen books in the English language that are most widely read. Their range is very wide, the topics dealt with being literary, biographical, and historical. As a literary critic he falls far below such men as Coleridge, De Quincey, and Matthew Arnold. He could infallibly discriminate between good poetry or good prose, and bad ; and his judgments, always oracularly delivered, are generally sound. But when he comes to give reasons for those judgments he is lamentably inadequate. Of his own prose style it may safely be asserted that nothing more brilliant has ever been produced. No one has surpassed him in the art of telling a story ;—the criterion surely by which all historical compositions must be judged ! He is as clear as crystal, the short sentences, of which the well-constructed paragraphs are composed, pressing forward with cumulative strength to the inevitable conclusion. He is a supreme master of rhetoric, with a great love for gorgeous pomp, and an unerring eye for dramatic effect. There is abundant wit and sarcasm ; but little irony, and perhaps nothing entitled to be termed sublime. No writer has ever indulged in such wealth of illustration and allusion. The whole of literature and the whole of history, from Pericles and Plato down to Guizot and Scott, are ransacked to furnish these ; and they are drawn indifferently from the sublimest treatises and the flimsiest plays.

His famous essay on Milton was published in the *Edinburgh Review* when he was twenty-five, and all his other essays appeared in the same periodical. The *Milton* is positive as a young man's writing should be, learned, effective, and histrionic, as when towards the end of the essay he writes :

We image to ourselves the breathless silence in which we should listen to his slightest word, the passionate veneration with which we should kneel to kiss his hand and weep upon it, the earnestness with which we should endeavour to console him, if indeed such a spirit could need consolation, for the neglect of an age unworthy of his talents and his virtues, the eagerness with which we should contest with his daughters, or with his Quaker friend Elwood, the privilege of reading Homer to him, or of taking down the immortal accents which flowed from his lips.

That of course is oratory, and not too sincere oratory at that.



The essays have been divided into essays on English history, essays on foreign history, political essays, and literary essays. In them all, there is the quality which in a lesser man would be called cocksureness, joined to a love of hard hitting for its own sake. Thus, in the essay on Warren Hastings he describes one John Williams as "that malignant and filthy baboon," and wasting his critical talent on the pitiful poet Robert Montgomery he says :

We have no enmity to Mr. Robert Montgomery. We know nothing whatever about him, except what we have learned from his books, and from the portrait prefixed to one of them, in which he appears to be doing his very best to look like a man of genius and sensibility, though with less success than his strenuous exertions deserve. We select him, because his works have received more enthusiastic praise, and have deserved more unmixed contempt, than any which, as far as our knowledge extends, have appeared within the last three or four years. His writing bears the same relation to poetry which a Turkey carpet bears to a picture.

In his literary essays Macaulay is at his best in the fine eulogy of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, in which occurs the well-known passage :

That wonderful book, while it obtains admiration from the most fastidious critics, is loved by those who are too simple to admire it. Dr. Johnson, all whose studies were desultory, and who hated, as he said, to read books through, made an exception in favour of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. That work was one of the two or three works which he wished longer. It was by no common merit that the illiterate sectary extracted praise like this from the most pedantic of critics and the most bigoted of Tories. In the wildest parts of Scotland the *Pilgrim's Progress* is the delight of the peasantry. In every nursery the *Pilgrim's Progress* is a greater favourite than *Jack the Giant-killer*. Every reader knows the straight and narrow path as well as he knows a road in which he has gone backward and forward a hundred times. This is the highest miracle of genius that things which are not should be as though they were, that the imaginations of one mind should become the personal recollections of another. And this miracle the tinker has wrought.

The same realisation of the intimate connection between great literature and life is expressed in the essay on Moore's *Life of Byron*, in which he says :

Since the first great masterpieces [of poetry] were produced, everything that is changeable in this world has been changed. Civilisation has been gained, lost, gained again. Religions, and languages, and forms of government, and usages of private life, and modes of thinking, all have undergone a succession of revolutions. Everything has passed away but the great features of nature, and the heart of man, and the miracles of that art of which it is the office to reflect back the heart of man and the features of nature. Those two strange old poems, the wonder of ninety generations, still retain all their freshness. They still command the veneration of minds enriched by the literature of many nations and ages. They

are still, even in wretched translations, the delight of schoolboys. Having survived ten thousand capricious fashions, having seen successive codes of criticism become obsolete, they still remain to us, immortal with the immortality of truth, the same when perused in the study of an English scholar, as when they were first chanted at the banquets of the Ionian princes.

Matthew Arnold, to whom Macaulay with his insistent common sense was the embodiment of Philistinism, sneered at his poetry, but Saintsbury has justly said that Macaulay's poetry is "poetry for the million . . . but not the less poetry ; and those who do not recognise the poetic quality in it show that their poetical thermometer is deficient in delicacy and range." *The Lays of Ancient Rome* (1842) have probably had more readers than any other English book of verse. "And even the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear to cheer" has become a journalistic cliché, and for two generations public meetings have been stirred to the soul by

Then none was for a party ;  
 Then all were for the state ;  
 Then the great man helped the poor,  
 And the poor man loved the great :  
 Then lands were fairly portioned ;  
 Then spoils were fairly sold :  
 The Romans were like brothers  
 In the brave days of old.

Doubtless it is all very obvious, but Macaulay never pretended to be subtle. He wrote ballads for the people, and the popular ballad has rarely in modern times had greater force and beauty than in the two last stanzas of *Horatius* :

When the oldest cask is opened  
 And the largest lamp is lit ;  
 When the chestnuts glow in the embers,  
 And the kid turns on the spit ;  
 When young and old in circle  
 Around the firebrands close ;  
 When the girls are weaving baskets,  
 And the lads are shaping bows ;

When the goodman mends his armour  
 And trims his helmet's plume ;  
 When the goodwife's shuttle merrily  
 Goes flashing through the loom ;  
 With weeping and with laughter  
 Still is the story told,  
 How well Horatius kept the bridge  
 In the brave days of old.



## § 4

James Anthony Froude was born in 1818, and died in 1894. Like Gibbon, he was educated at Westminster, whence he proceeded to Oriel College, Oxford. It was the period of Newman's ascendancy, and Froude succumbed to the spell of the great teacher. Indeed, his first literary enterprise was a *Life of St. Neot*, for Newman's series of Lives of the British Saints. However, he soon broke with the tractarians; and during the rest of his life took a large and active part in the war against orthodoxy, particularly in the form of Anglo-Catholicism. The middle years of his career were devoted to study and writing, first at Nant Gwynant in North Wales and afterwards at Bideford. He travelled extensively in the Colonies; edited *Fraser's Magazine*; and, in the last year of his life, held the Regius Professorship of Modern History at Oxford. The great fact of Froude's life was his friendship with Carlyle, whom he regarded with the veneration which the disciple feels for the inspired prophet. He became Carlyle's sole literary executor, and the best of his biographers, though he did his master an ill service in his revelations of his private life.

Froude's writings are both voluminous and varied. The most ambitious is the *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, a work which occupies twelve volumes. Although it begins in the middle of a reign and ends in the middle of another, it nevertheless possesses a real unity; for it purports to relate the history of the struggle between King and Pope in this country, with the ultimate victory of the former.

Froude was an ardent partisan; and his incomparable gift of eloquence was used to the full to vindicate Henry VIII and the Protestant leaders, and to vilify the Catholics. Of Froude's marvellous literary ability there never was any question. As a story-teller he rivals Macaulay. His knowledge of stage effect is perfect. The pictures he paints are superb in their vividness. His prose is natural and pure, and at the same time has abundant colour. In his writings there undoubtedly are passages which earn for him a place with the supreme masters of English prose, above Gibbon, or Macaulay, or Carlyle.

It is extremely difficult to do any sort of justice to Froude by short quotations, for his strength lies in continuous narrative. The following passage will, however, give the reader some idea of the beauty of his prose, and the dramatic qualities which make all his writings such fascinating reading.

No more notable spectacle had been witnessed in this planet for many a century—not, perhaps, since a greater than Luther stood before the Roman

Procurator. There on the raised dais sat the sovereign of half the world. There on either side of him stood the archbishops, the ministers of state, the princes of the empire, gathered together to hear and judge the son of a poor miner, who had made the world ring with his name. The body of the hall was thronged with knights and nobles—stern hard men in dull gleaming armour. Luther, in his brown frock, was led forward between their ranks. The looks which greeted him were not all unfriendly. The first article of a German credo was belief in *courage*. Germany had had its feuds in times past with Popes of Rome, and they were not without pride that a poor countryman of theirs should have taken by the beard the great Italian priest. They had settled among themselves that, come what would, there should be fair play; and they looked on half admiring, and half in scorn. As Luther passed up the hall, a steel lance touched him on the shoulder with his gauntlet. "Pluck up thy spirit, little monk," he said, "some of us here have seen warm work in our time, but, by my troth, nor I nor any knight in this company ever needed a stout heart more than thou needest it now. If thou hast faith in these doctrines of thine, little monk, go on, in the name of God." "Yes, in the name of God," said Luther, throwing back his head, "in the name of God, forward!"

The other notable Victorian historians include Henry Hallam (1777–1859), author of the *Constitutional History of England from the Accession of Henry VII to the Death of George II*, a not too reliable Whig; Edward Freeman (1823–1892), author of the *History of the Norman Conquest*, an enormously long book written by a careful and unimaginative scholar; Samuel Rawson Gardiner (1829–1902), whose impartiality perilously approaches dullness; John Richard Green (1837–1883), whose *Short History of the English People* remains the most stimulating summary of this country's story; and Alexander Kinglake (1809–1891), the brilliant author of the *History of the War in the Crimea* (1863–1887) and of that delightful perennial of travel, *Eothen*, (1844).

## § 5

AN OUTLINE OF LITERATURE has obviously only a secondary concern with the mass of philosophic, religious, and scientific writing produced in the Victorian era. Just, however, as Ruskin and Carlyle were both philosophers and writers of genius, so John Henry Newman was both a religious teacher and controversialist and a supreme literary artist. From school he went to Trinity College, Oxford. In 1828 he became the incumbent of St. Mary's Church, Oxford, and it was during his fifteen years at St. Mary's that the tractarian movement was launched and the famous Tracts for the Times, written by Newman, Pusey, and Hurrell Froude, were published. Newman, himself, was the author of Tract XC, which declares that the Church of England is Catholic and not Protestant. Two



years after the publication of this tract, Newman joined the Church of Rome, and to quote Disraeli, Anglicanism "reeled under the shock." He died in 1890. The greater part of his later life was spent at the Birmingham Oratory, his time being filled with writing and often with bitter religious controversies which must have been antipathetic to his shy, sensitive nature. He was created a cardinal in 1879.

Newman's writings included poems, sermons, historical and theological essays, and polemical treatises. His best-known prose works are the *Grammar of Assent* and the *Apologia pro Vita sua* (1864), his spiritual biography. His prose is splendidly lucid and vigorous, attractive to readers who have no kind of sympathy with the writer's opinions; at times, it is delicate and subtle. The following passage from the *Apologia* is an example of Newman's wonderful mastery of words:

To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, the many races of man, their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts; and then their ways, habits, governments, forms of worship; their enterprises, their aimless courses, their random achievements and acquirements, the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts, the tokens so faint and broken of a superintending design, the blind evolution of what turn out to be great powers or truths, the progress of things, as if from unreasoning elements, not towards final causes, the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity, the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race, so fearfully yet exactly described in the Apostle's words, "having no hope and without God in the world,"—all this is a vision to dizzy and appal; and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution.

As a poet, Newman is best known and loved for the hymn *Lead, kindly Light*, which he wrote in 1833 while journeying home from Sicily. He published four volumes of verse. R. H. Hutton declared that his early poems are "unequalled for grandeur of outline, purity of taste, and radiance of total effort"; but it is in *The Dream of Gerontius*, written when he was a man of sixty-five, that his poetic genius finds its perfect expression. *The Dream of Gerontius* is Newman's own dream of the passing of a soul from this world to Purgatory. He thought so little of the poem himself, that he put it away in a pigeon-hole and forgot all about it, and it was by an accident that it was first published in the Roman Catholic magazine, the *Month*. Though far shorter and slighter, *The Dream of Gerontius* has been compared to Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Dr. Alexander Whyte has said: "*The Dream of Gerontius* was the true copestone for Newman to cut and to lay on the literary and religious work of his whole

life. Had Dante himself composed *The Dream of Gerontius* as his elegy on the death of some beloved friend, it would have been universally received as altogether worthy of his superb genius, and it would have been a jewel altogether worthy of his peerless crown. There is nothing of its kind outside of the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* at all equal to the *Gerontius* for solemnising, ennobling, and sanctifying power. It is a poem that every man should have by heart who has it before him to die."

*The Dream of Gerontius* contains the famous hymn *Praise to the Holiest in the Height*, and perhaps the noblest lines in the poem are those in which an angel explains his condition to the dead Gerontius :

A disembodied soul, thou hast by right  
No converse with aught else beside thyself ;  
But, lest so stern a solitude should load  
And break thy being, in mercy are vouchsafed  
Some lower measures of perception,  
Which seem to thee, as though through channels brought,  
Through ear, or nerves, or palate, which are gone.  
And thou art wrapped and swathed around in dreams,  
Dreams that are true yet enigmatical ;  
For the belongings of thy present state,  
Save through such symbols, come not home to thee.

"And thou art wrapped and swathed around in dreams" is magnificent in its pensive beauty.

The poem concludes with the angel's promise to the soul, left for a little while in Purgatory :

Angels, to whom the willing task is given,  
Shall tend, and nurse, and lull thee, as thou liest ;  
And Masses on the earth, and prayers in heaven,  
Shall aid thee at the Throne of the Most Highest.

Farewell, but not for ever ! brother dear,  
Be brave and patient on thy bed of sorrow ;  
Swiftly shall pass thy night of trial here,  
And I will come and wake thee on the morrow.

## § 6

George Borrow, one of the most individual writers of the Victorian era, was born in 1803. At the age of twenty-nine George Borrow had already given proof of two dominant characteristics—his passion for wandering and his gift of strange tongues. The son of a sergeant-major in the West Norfolk Militia, his childhood was spent following his father's regiment as it moved up and down the kingdom collecting recruits to fight Napoleon.



The West Norfolks were disbanded after the war, and Captain Borrow, as he had now become, settled with a modest pension at Norwich. Here George attended the grammar school for three years, and then served as articled clerk to a firm of local solicitors. Law, however, had no charm for him compared with the fascination of languages. Though never an accurate philological scholar, he possessed marvellous powers of picking up any foreign speech.

At Norwich he contrived to learn Welsh on Sundays from a Welsh groom, he talked Romany with friendly gipsies, he studied Danish in the Guildhall Library, he had lessons in Hebrew from a Jew, and in Spanish and Italian from a French *émigré*, and he read German with William Taylor, a clever but dissolute man of letters in the cathedral city.

After his father's death, in 1824, Borrow betook himself to London, and tried to earn a living by literary hack-work. We get glimpses of him rambling in company with gipsies, or travelling about England with a tinker's cart, or roving along the road in France and Spain. But Borrow was back at Norwich with his widowed mother in 1832, when a clergyman who knew his rare gift for mastering languages introduced him as a linguist to the officials of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

The problem at this time was to produce the Manchu New Testament. The Committee of the Society promptly set Borrow to study this Tartar tongue. So impressed were they by his capacity that six months later they dispatched him to St. Petersburg, where there was a damaged set of type of St. Matthew's Gospel. He went armed with introductions, through which he obtained countenance from the Russian authorities. He rescued and cleansed the type. He conquered endless difficulties with printers, and himself superintended the press-work. He learned enough Manchu to transcribe and correct the translation and read the proofs. By dint of his energy and toil and business tact, one thousand copies of the New Testament were bound and delivered in August 1835.

On his return to London the Society decided to send its successful young agent to the Peninsula, and in November 1835 he landed at Lisbon. He found Portugal "gasping and dazed" after years of civil conflict. In the first week of 1836 he crossed the frontier into Spain, where a furious civil war was still going on. His next four or five years were spent in riding up and down that romantic country, distributing Spanish Bibles and Testaments, and incidentally enjoying a long series of adventures by no means free from personal peril.

As his manner was, he made friends with all sorts and conditions of men—Carlists, smugglers, priests, peasants, Jews, ambassadors, and vagabonds. He conversed frankly with the Prime Minister of Spain and the Archbishop of Toledo. He saw the inside of more than one Spanish prison.



At Madrid he opened a Bible shop, and contrived to publish editions of the Spanish New Testament, a Gospel in Basque, and St. Luke translated by himself into Gitano for Spanish gipsies. He wrote home to the officials of the Bible Society long reports of these experiences set out in his own vivid, graphic style. Certainly no society ever possessed a more astonishing correspondent.

In April 1840 Borrow finally left Spain and returned to London. The week after his arrival he bade farewell to the Society, and married a widow lady who possessed a grown-up daughter, a small estate, and a house at Oulton, near Lowestoft. There he settled down and spent most of the second half of his life. In 1841 he published *The Zingali*, an account of the gipsies in Spain, which he spoke of as "this strange wandering book of mine." At Oulton he also conceived the fortunate idea of utilising his letters and reports and personal journals and producing a volume "containing all my queer adventures in that queer country while engaged in distributing the Gospel." His friend Richard Ford, who acted as a sort of godfather to *The Bible in Spain*, described it as "a rum, very rum mixture," and compared it to *Gil Blas* blended with John Bunyan.

The work was published in three volumes by Mr. Murray at the end of 1842, and achieved immediate and immense success. It gave Borrow his first and greatest vogue. Here was a traveller, full of courage and gusto, who could ride and box and talk strange dialects—a robust writer in love with his fellow-men, who saw them all dramatically and pictured them in bold, sinewy English—a missionary who somehow contrived to convey the impression that St. Paul's adventures and voyages were relatively humdrum compared with his own.

*The Bible in Spain* was followed by the famous *Lavengro*, published in 1851, and *Romany Rye*, published in 1857. *Lavengro* is perhaps the most fascinating open-air book in the English language. Who that reads it can fail to pay homage to Isopel Berners? And the fight of the Flaming Tin-man is perhaps the most famous and thrilling fisticuffs bout in fiction.

Someone has spoken of Borrow as "the prose Morland of a vanished roadside." Yet he interests us most of all when he is writing his own life, generally under some mystifying disguise. That life, indeed, had its shadows. He suffered from constant melancholia and depression. Too often he quarrelled with friends, and made not a few enemies. In his old age he grew disappointed and morose, and spent many dismal solitary hours. In the end he died alone. George Borrow never seemed so like the happy warrior as when he galloped his black Andalusian stallion over rocky tracks in the Peninsula, wearing (as he says) in his hat the colours of the Bible Society.

Borrow is an out-of-doors, open-air writer; but equally so was Robert



Surtees (1802–1864), the greatest sporting novelist England has ever produced. The world of sport, particularly of the hunting field, through Surtees became part of the English tradition. Two of his novels are *Handley Cross* and *Hillingdon Hall*.

## § 7

It is outside the scope of this OUTLINE to consider the writings of scientists and philosophers at any length. Charles Darwin (1809–1882) stands pre-eminent among the Victorian scientists. The nineteenth century, indeed, has been called “Darwin’s century.” After leaving Cambridge, he sailed on H.M.S. *Beagle* to make a survey of the South American coast. The result of this journey was his first book, *A Naturalist’s Voyage Round the World*, published in 1839. Darwin was a man of means, and on his return from South America he settled down in Kent and devoted his life to scientific investigation. His theories concerning the evolution of the human race are set out in his famous book, *The Origin of Species*.

Darwin’s best-known disciple was Thomas Henry Huxley, who was born in 1825, and, by common consent, one of the three or four most accomplished of English scientists. Huxley’s *Handbook of Biology* is written in a manner that makes it readable for the unscientific reader. He was a man of science, but he was also a man of letters, with an all-round interest in life. Some of his best writing is to be found in his *Lay Sermons*, of which the following is an extract. The passage is taken from an essay on *The Origin of Species*, written in 1860. It is, of course, characterised by the cocksureness of the Victorian scientist. But the force and humour of the writing must be evident even to those who disagree with Huxley’s opinion.

In this nineteenth century, as at the dawn of modern physical science, the cosmogony of the semi-barbarous Hebrew is the incubus of the philosopher and the opprobrium of the orthodox. Who shall number the patient and earnest seekers after truth, from the days of Galileo until now, whose lives have been embittered and their good name blasted by the mistaken zeal of Bibliolaters? Who shall count the host of weaker men whose sense of truth has been destroyed in the effort to harmonise impossibilities—whose life has been wasted in the attempt to force the generous new wine of Science into the old bottles of Judaism compelled by the outcry of the same strong party?

It is true that if philosophers have suffered, their cause has been amply avenged. Extinguished theologians lie about the cradle of every science as the strangled snakes beside that of Hercules; and history records that whenever science and orthodoxy have been fairly opposed, the latter has been forced to retire from the lists, bleeding and crushed, if not annihilated; scotched, if not slain. But orthodoxy is the Bourbon of the world of thought. It learns not, neither can it forget; and though, at present, bewildered and afraid to move, it is as willing as ever to insist that the first chapter of Genesis contains the beginning and the end of

sound science ; and to visit, with such petty thunderbolts as its half-paralysed hands can hurl, those who refuse to degrade Nature to the level of primitive Judaism.

Philosophers, on the other hand, have no such aggressive tendencies. With eyes fixed on the noble goal to which *per aspera et ardua* they tend, they may, now and then, be stirred to momentary wrath by the unnecessary obstacles with which the ignorant or the malicious, encumber, if they cannot bar, the difficult path ; but why should their souls be deeply vexed ? The majesty of Fact is on their side, and the elemental forces of Nature are working for them. Not a star comes to the meridian at its calculated time but testifies to the justice of their methods—their beliefs are “one with the falling rain and with the growing corn.” By doubt they are established, and open inquiry is their bosom friend. Such men have no fear of traditions, however venerable, and no respect for them when they become mischievous and obstructive ; but they have better than mere antiquarian business in hand, and if dogmas, which ought to be fossil but are not, are not forced upon their notice, they are too happy to treat them as non-existent.

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), best known of the Victorian philosophers, sought to reconcile psychology and ethics with the discoveries of Darwin and his contemporaries. He was a voluminous writer, but it is sufficient here to say of him that he carried on the great tradition of English philosophic writing which began with Bacon and was continued by Hobbes, Locke, and Berkeley.

It is impossible, too, to make more than a passing reference to John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), a prodigy who could read Greek and Latin when he was eight ; who, following in the tradition of Adam Smith, became the foremost economist of his age ; and who wrote an outstanding essay *On Liberty* (1858) and a remarkable *System of Logic* (1843).

## § 8

Ruskin was a poet.

That is the essential thing to understand about him. What he took himself to be, a thinker, a teacher, a prophet, born, by a cursed spite, to set the world right—this aspect of himself was pure illusion. His opinions upon every subject under heaven, his ideas concerning life and art, were merely the caprices which happened, at the time of writing, to be floating through his brain, and were mostly destined to be damned thereafter, by himself, in words of angry fire. None the less, he looked upon himself, quite sincerely, as an Olympian, secure from mortal error. “I know,” he says in one of his letters, “that I am at one with the wisest men of all ages.” As for common men and common things :

The English Constitution is the rottenest mixture of Simony, bribery, sneaking tyranny, shameless cowardice, and accomplished lying, that ever the Devil chewed small to spit into God’s Paradise.



With the same Olympian confidence he posed as an authority on music, on which subject he put forth some strange gems of criticism. "Beethoven," he remarked, "always sounds to me like the upsetting of bags of nails, with here and there an also dropped hammer."

As an art critic, which he chiefly was, he held the view that painting is a language to convey *ideas*, that being the greatest painting wherein most ideas are conveyed. This, of course, is not the view of most of the great artists of the world, who set a value on technique quite apart from subject, and who regard a painter, not as a purveyor of ideas, but as a creator of things of beauty. If Ruskin disliked the subject of a picture, his "criticism" was satire; and as for his satire, no man could make a thing which he disliked look more ridiculous.

The following extracts are of interest, not only for the light they throw on Ruskin's modes of thought, but because they are admirable examples of his wide diversities of style. The reader judging of him solely by his opinions is apt to throw away the book, disgusted. But this is taking a wrong point of view. Ruskin was a *poet*. And when, instead of laying down the law, he is writing as a poet pure and simple, he is one of the most delightful that the world has ever seen. Jupiter has turned into Apollo.

It would be easy to extract from Ruskin's work a volume—an enchanting volume—of selections full of the glamour, the mystery, and the charm of poetry, full of the light that never was on sea or land—true poems, although the form of them is not the form of verse and rhyme, but of "that other harmony of prose." Take this, for example:

There the priest is on the beach alone, the sun setting. He prays to it as it descends; flakes of its sheeted light are borne to him by the melancholy waves, and cast away with sighs upon the sand.

This is a prose-poem. It is a poem both in tone and cadence. Its words have something of the power usually found only in the finest verse. Like that, it steals upon the soul with music, dies off, and leaves it satisfied.

And what is this on Venice?

—a ghost upon the sands of the sea, so weak, so quiet, so bereft of all but her loveliness, that we might well doubt, as we watched her faint reflection in the mirage of the lagoon, which was the City and which the Shadow.

Here is Ruskin's description of a picture, "April Love," by Arthur Hughes. It requires no comment. It has a magic beyond all words.

Exquisite in every way; lovely in colour, most subtle in the quivering expression of the lips, and sweetness of the tender face, shaken like a leaf by winds upon its dew and hesitating back into peace.



Much of Ruskin's special power is doubtless owing to his amazingly fine sense of colour. Indeed, in his eye for colour, he is the Keats of prose. Before his time, in prose description the grass indeed was green and the sky blue—but this was nearly all. It would be vain to seek through all the writings of his predecessors for the slightest of such fragments as those that strew his pages ; brief colour-sketches of “ the flakes of scarlet cloud burning like watch-fires in the green sky of the horizon—the level twilight behind purple hills—or the scarlet arch of dawn over the dark, troublous-edged sea.”

Nor is it only in painting straight from nature that this unrivalled faculty appears. The following is from a picture—Turner's “ Slave Ship.” Note how the colour burns and glows throughout it—“ an intense and lurid splendour ” :

It is a sunset on the Atlantic, after prolonged storm ; but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn and streaming rain-clouds are moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow of the night. The whole surface of sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous swell, not high, nor local, but a low, broad heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath, after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an awful but glorious light, the intense and lurid splendour which burns like gold and bathes like blood. Along this fiery path and valley, the tossing waves by which the swell of the sea is restlessly divided, lift themselves in dark, indefinite, fantastic forms, each casting a faint and ghastly shadow behind it along the illumined foam. They do not rise everywhere, but three or four together in wild groups, fitfully and furiously, as the under strength of the swell compels or permits them ; leaving between them treacherous spaces of level and whirling water, now lighted with green and lamp-like fire, now flashing back the gold of the declining sun, now fearfully dyed from above with the indistinguishable images of the burning clouds, which fall upon them in flakes of crimson and scarlet, and give to the restless waves the added motion of their own fiery flying. Purple and blue, the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of the night, which gathers cold and low, advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty ship as it labours amidst the lightning of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood, girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight, and, cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea.

If, for our own part, we had to fix upon his finest passage, we should pause and waver between five or six ; but in the end we should, we think, be forced to settle upon “ Moss and Lichens ” :

Meek creatures ! The first mercy of the earth, veiling with hushed softness its dintless rocks. No words that I know of will say what mosses are. None are delicate enough, none perfect enough, none rich enough. How is one to



tell of the rounded bosses of furred and beaming green—the starred divisions of rubied bloom, fine-filmed, as if the Rock Spirits could spin porphyry as we do glass—the traceries of intricate silver, and fringes of amber, lustrous, arborescent, burnished through every fibre into fitful brightness and glossy traverses of silken change, yet all subdued and pensive, and framed for simplest, sweetest offices of grace. They will not be gathered, like the flowers, for chaplet or love-token; but of these the wild bird will make his nest, and the wearied child his pillow.

And, as the earth's first mercy, so they are its last gift to us. When all other service is vain, from plant and tree, the soft mosses and gray lichen take up their watch by the headstone. The woods, the blossoms, the gift-bearing grasses, have done their parts for a time, but these do service for ever. Trees for the builder's yard, flowers for the bride's chamber, corn for the granary, moss for the grave.

Yet as in one sense the humblest, in another they are the most honoured of the earth-children. Unfading as motionless, the worm frets them not, and the autumn wastes not. Strong in lowliness, they neither blanch in heat nor pine in frost. To them, slow-fingered, constant-hearted, is entrusted the weaving of the dark eternal tapestries of the hills; to them, slow-pencilled, iris-dyed, the tender framing of their endless imagery. Sharing the stillness of the unimpassioned rock, they share also its endurance; and while the winds of departing spring scatter the white hawthorn-blossom like drifted snow, and summer dims on the parched meadow the drooping of its cowslip-gold—far above, among the mountains, the silver lichen-spots rest, starlike, on the stone; and the gathering orange stain upon the edge of yonder western peak reflects the sunsets of a thousand years.

Such is the work of Ruskin at his best and greatest—and it is by his best and greatest, and by that only, that a man must in the end be judged. It is work that will not die. Opinions, systems, fashions of critique, spring up and perish; for the seed of death is in them. But the words of the real poets live for ever. The Spirit of Beauty has filled them with the breath of life, and made them, like itself, immortal. And of such are these.

Born in the year 1819, Ruskin was the only child of a wealthy wine merchant of Denmark Hill. He was brought up at home, "with no other prospect than the brick walls over the way"; so that when he began to travel the beauties of nature came upon his mind with all the greater force, "with an indefinable thrill such as we sometimes imagine to indicate the presence of a disembodied spirit." His passion for landscape, and for Turner as the painter of it, produced the first volume of his great work, *Modern Painters* (1843), which afterwards became expanded into five volumes, on nature, art, and morals. *Stones of Venice* (1849), on the whole his greatest book, was a most picturesque and careful study of the buildings and the art of Venice. For some years he continued to produce a series of smaller works, *The Ethics of the Dust*, *The Crown of Wild Olive*, *Sesame*

and *Lilies*, *The Queen of the Air*, *Unto This Last*, and many others. The subjects dealt with in these books are of every kind—letters, economics, mythology, science, art—and all are treated according to the peculiar methods which have been indicated, often wild and weak in thought, but often also, both in feeling and expression, such as could come only from a poet's soul.

Ruskin died at Coniston in the year 1900.

The two Victorian writers most affected by Ruskin's cult of beauty and ideal of writing as "building up pictures for the eye" were John Addington Symonds and Walter Pater. Symonds was born in 1840 and died in 1893. Of his many books the *History of the Renaissance* is the most important. It is very long and very florid, but it is a valuable guide to an absorbingly interesting epoch. Symonds was also a subtle, delicate, penetrating critic of and theorist on literature; and something of a poet.

Pater (1839–1894) wrote a beautiful prose, delicate, full of music, unique in English literature. His most read work is *Marcus the Epicurean*, in which he describes the intellectual and spiritual journey, through various philosophies to Christianity, of a Roman of the time of Marcus Aurelius. Along with *Marius* must be placed his exquisite *Imaginary Portraits*, the perfection of his highly styleised poetic prose. Like Symonds, he wrote luminously on European art and literature. His book, *The Renaissance*, is one of the most brilliant of all writings on this subject, its final chapter, "Conclusion," a defence of the æsthetic attitude to life which has had great influence. These two men were the causers and prophets and idols of that wave of æstheticism which swept England during the approximate period 1878–1895.

## § 9

Richard Jefferies, the son of a small Wiltshire farmer, strikes an entirely new note in the literature of the countryside. Born in 1848, of a typical English yeoman stock, which for generations had lived and worked in an environment which, in essentials, had changed little for hundreds of years, he gave expression to the spirit, the thoughts, and the dreams common among such folk, though normally unvocalised and even unformulated. A good deal of his writing consists of the records of careful observations of country events, more or less in the manner of White's *Natural History*; but that which specially characterises him is a lyrical spirit and spiritual sense quite alien to the old Selborne clergyman.

Jefferies had three great difficulties to contend with, though whether



in the total result they helped or hindered, it is hard to say. They were poverty, lack of education, and ill-health. He shared not only the external but the cultural environment of the rustic. His life was a short one. Born in 1848, he was but thirty-nine years old when he died; yet during that time he produced a considerable body of writings, much of which has permanent value. His writing career began as that of an ordinary provincial reporter; and, at about the same time, he wrote some novels of less than no merit. He had little human experience, and less book-knowledge, to help him.

In 1878, Jefferies' first important volume, *The Gamekeeper at Home*, was published. Practical and realistic to a degree, this book had a considerable vogue, by reason of the accuracy and intimacy of its observation. Four other books of a somewhat similar type quickly followed—*Wild Life in a Southern County*, *Hodge and his Masters*, *Round about a Great Estate*, and *The Amateur Poacher*. These were all studies in realism, and their effects were produced by the presentation of a large collection of accurate and relevant details. In 1881 Jefferies had sufficiently mastered his art to venture on a new kind of book. In the form of a fable, entitled *Wood Magic*, the doings and adventures of animals are treated in the anthropomorphic manner of a boy. The result was one of the most charming fantasies in our literature. *Bevis: The Story of a Boy* followed in the succeeding year. These two books constitute the essential biography of Jefferies' boyhood. They are necessary documents for anyone who would understand his mind and spirit. The ideal peace he desired, though his temperament made it impossible, is shown in the talk of his characters. Here is the reed speaking in *Wood Magic*:

There is no *why* at all. We have been listening to the brook, me and my family, for ever so many thousands of years; and, though the brook had been talking and singing all that time, I never heard him ask *why* about anything. And the great oak, where you went to sleep, has been there, goodness knows how long, nobody can tell how long, and every one of his leaves have all been talking, but not one of them ever asked *why*; nor does the sun, nor the stars, which I see every night shining in the clear water down there; so that I am quite sure there is no *why* at all.

That was the peace for which Jefferies yearned, but he could never win it. The reason is shown on nearly every page of his oddest, and nearly his last, book, *The Story of my Heart*. This remarkable volume is Jefferies' real autobiography; the soul-story of that queer blend, a sensual mystic.

## READING LIST

Hugh Walker, *Literature of the Victorian Era* (Cambridge University Press), and George Saintsbury, *A History of Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Macmillan), are more than merely serviceable : they are adequate to the theme. Even better is Oliver Elton, *A Survey of English Literature : 1830-80* (Arnold).

CARLYLE : Messrs. Chapman & Hall publish various editions of Carlyle's works.

*Sartor Resartus* (World's Classics).

*On Heroes and Hero Worship* (Everyman's).

*Past and Present* (World's Classics).

*Essays* (2 vols. in Everyman's).

*A History of the First Forty Years of his Life*, by J. A. Froude, 2 vols. (Longmans).

*A History of his Life in London*, by J. A. Froude, 2 vols. (Longmans).

MACAULAY : Messrs. Longmans publish various editions of Lord Macaulay's works.

Messrs. Dent publish several of his works in the Everyman's Library.

*The History of England* (World's Classics).

Sir G. O. Trevelyan's *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* (Longmans).

J. A. FROUDE : *Short Studies on Great Subjects* (Longmans, various editions).

Also in 2 vols. in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

*History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Death of Elizabeth*, 10 vols. (Dent).

A. W. KINGLAKE : *Eothen* appears in Collins's Classics, Everyman's Library, and Nelson Classics.

HERBERT SPENCER : Messrs. Watts publish the works of Herbert Spencer.

*Essays on Education and Kindred Subjects*, "Everyman's Library."

CARDINAL NEWMAN : Messrs. Longmans publish the majority of Cardinal Newman's works, including :

*The Dream of Gerontius*, *The Ideal of a University*, *An Essay in aid of a Grammar of Assent*, *Apologia pro Vita Sua*.

*Apologia* is also in Everyman's, as also is *University Education*.

*The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, by Wilfred Ward, 2 vols. (Longmans).

GEORGE BORROW : the definitive edition of the Works is published by Murray. Cheap editions of the most famous works in the Everyman's and World's Classics series.

R. S. SURTEES : His novels (he wrote only novels) are published by Methuen.

DARWIN : *The Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection* (John Murray).

*Descent of Man and Selection in relation to Sex* (John Murray).

*Voyage of the Beagle*, in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

*Charles Darwin ; his Life told in an Autobiographical Chapter, and in a*



*Selected Series of his Published Letters*, edited by his son, Sir Francis Darwin (Murray).

T. H. HUXLEY : *The Life and Works of Thomas Henry Huxley*, 12 vols. (Macmillan).

*Man's Place in Nature* is also in Everyman's.

P. Chalmers Mitchell's *Thomas Henry Huxley ; a Sketch of his Life and Works* (Methuen).

JOHN STUART MILL : *Political Economy*, with an Introduction by Sir W. J. Ashley (Longmans).

*On Liberty* (Longmans ; also World's Classics).

*System of Logic* (Longmans).

*The Subjection of Women* (Longmans).

*Autobiography* (World's Classics).

W. L. Courtney's *J. S. Mill* in the Great Writers Series (Walter Scott)

RUSKIN : Messrs. Geo. Allen & Unwin publish Ruskin's works in many different editions, including a Pocket edition in 50 volumes, a Popular edition, etc., etc.

Frederick Harrison's *Ruskin* in the English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan).

J. Howard Whitehouse (and others), *Ruskin the Prophet, and Other Centenary Essays* (Allen & Unwin).

*The Order of Release*, by Admiral Sir W. James (Murray) has much new matter on Ruskin's personal life.

*John Ruskin, A Biography*, by Joan Evans (Cape), and *The Diaries of John Ruskin*, by Joan Evans and J. H. Whitehouse (Oxford University Press), are excellent recent publications.

J. A. SYMONDS ; WALTER PATER : Some of the former's, all of the latter's works are published by Macmillan. Heinemann's also publish the selected works of Walter Pater, edited by Richard Aldington.

RICHARD JEFFERIES : *The Gamekeeper at Home* (Cape ; also in Collins's Classics).

*Bevis : The Story of a Boy*, Everyman's Library (Dent).

*Wild Life in a Southern County* (Collins's Classics).

*The Amateur Poacher* (Murray).

*Wild Life in a Southern County* (Murray).

*Wood Magic* (Longmans ; also in Collins's Classics).

*The Story of my Heart* (Longmans).

A new edition of the work of Richard Jefferies, edited by Samuel J. Looker, has been published by the Lutterworth Press, and his *Richard Jefferies Companion*, by Phoenix. A uniform edition is published by Eyre & Spottiswoode, edited by C. Henry Warren.

## MODERN WRITERS, AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN

## § I

## THE LATER AMERICAN WRITERS

**D**URING the years immediately preceding 1918, when people spoke of contemporary American writers the first two names that occurred were inevitably those of Henry James and William Dean Howells. Both were fine artists, both voluminous, and both imbued with certain great traditions of the novel and letters in general. James died in 1916 and Howells in 1920. Yet rarely have two great literary figures been eclipsed so immediately after their death by a new spirit, a new fecundity, a new and wholly different outlook upon life and literature—the revolution in American letters that took place soon after the 1914-18 War was sudden and complete.

Henry James—born in 1843—was by nature, temperament, and choice a cosmopolite rather than an American. A father, imbued with a love of travel and possessed of private means, had early helped to Europeanise the boy who could write later, "The whole perfect Parisianism I seemed to myself always to have possessed mentally—even if I had but just turned twelve."

Upon his return to America, a young man, he was already virtually an alien. Already he was a disciple of Flaubert, Turgenev, Balzac, and Maupassant. At twenty-two, he was contributing to the *Atlantic Monthly*, and not very long thereafter he transferred his residence to the place where his heart was—Europe, and chiefly England; in 1875 he attracted notice with *Roderick Hudson*, and three years later he achieved fame with *Daisy Miller*.

Then began that series of studies of European writers, of European scenes, of novels, tales, short stories, laid mostly in the Europe familiar to him, of pensions and hotels in Italy, Switzerland, France, England. His Americans were almost always the Americans who travelled or resided in Europe, and his realism was the realism of their aloof lives. His people were the people one thinks of in the phrase "there is not a soul in town"—excluding the great mass of the population.

"He had been reared," observes Professor F. L. Pattee in his *American*



*Literature since 1870*, "in a cloister-like atmosphere where he had dreamed of 'life' rather than lived it. . . . He had played in his childhood with books rather than boys . . . he had never mingled with men in a business or a professorial way; he had never married; he stood aloof from life and observed it without being a part of it. Americans he knew chiefly from the specimens he had found in Europe. . . . European society he knew as a visitor from without. With nothing was he in sympathy in the full meaning of the word. . . ." Even an idea, as an English critic observes, he had never "caressed with the sensitive finger-tips of affection."

His novels by consequence are in a sense thin and shadowy, and devoid of the clash and stir of life. Even his most American novel, *The American*, presents in Christopher Newman, the self-made millionaire, such an American as could never have made himself or even the wash-tubs by the manufacture of which he is supposed to have prospered. And yet James was doubtless a great artist. His love of the English tongue was probably the supreme passion of his life.

England was his natural habitat. Not even the poet Clough loved the green fields of England more than did James, but what he chiefly loved were the traditions, the great parks and palaces, the leisured people who lived beautiful subtle lives, remote from clash and vulgarity, who knew nothing of common pains or common suffering—exquisite natures, like himself. This, which to many appears as snobbishness, is more generously interpreted by Van Wyck Brooks as a form of romanticism, a love of the romantic in life.

Art was the only deity of his worship, and, like one of his characters in *The Tragic Muse*, he had arrived early at a perception "of the perfect presence of mind, unconfused, unhurried by emotion, that any artistic performance required and that all, whatever the instrument, require in the same degree." James's was, however, an art too subtle for the larger public.

It has been said of Henry and his brother William that the former should have been the philosopher, the latter the novelist. However that may be, William James (1842-1910) is the most readable, lively, witty, and amusing of all American philosophers; he is also extremely shrewd, acute, penetrating. His best-known works are *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, *Pragmatism* and its sequel, *The Meaning of Truth*. With William James, philosophy has come alive.

## § 2

William Dean Howells was the first outspoken apostle of realism. It was his creed that "the sincere observer of man will not desire to look

upon his heroic or occasional phases, but will seek him in his habitual moods of vacancy and tiresomeness."

Like a gentle Lochinvar, Howells came out of the West, from his native Ohio, and captivated the refined New England public with his completely fashioned, charming style, his geniality, his grace. "He has the incapacity to be common," announced the *North American Review* in a notice of one of his early books. From the first his gentle, placid eighteenth-century realism charmed by its finish, polish, and absence of crudeness. His theory of the novel was that "the moving accident was certainly not its trade; and it prefers to avoid all manner of dire catastrophes." James he described as a character-painter, not a story-teller, and it is after all, he declared, "what a writer has to say rather than what he has to tell that we care for nowadays."

That was in 1882, when Howells was forty-five.

From Martin's Ferry, Ohio, he had made his way via Venice, Boston, and the *Atlantic Monthly* editorship to the position of the greatest force of his day in American letters.

It was during this post-*Atlantic* period, from 1881, after having already published fifteen volumes, that he began the series of his maturer novels, outstanding among which are *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, *A Modern Instance* (1882), and *The Quality of Mercy*, published in England as *Defalcation*.

Trained editor as he was, his tales as a rule possessed the "happy ending," despite the enunciated canons of his art. "I own that I like a finished story," he said, though on a public platform the present writer heard him apologetically confessing that his trammels were due to false models in his youth. Novels, stories, essays, travel, farces, poems (three volumes of them), came pouring out from the pen of William Dean Howells from then on, from a saturation, as James might have said, that must have been immense. But always it was not the "moving" accident that figured in the fictions, nor any catastrophe that was "dire," but the American manners of his age.

The influence of Tolstoy when it came later, made itself felt in such works as *The Traveler from Altruria*, in a certain fine altruism and sympathy with the downtrodden. But it had, on the whole, small effect upon his novels. Like James, remarks Professor Pattee, "he schooled himself to distrust the emotions and work wholly from the intellect. One smiles at the flashes of wit, one seldom laughs. No one ever shed a tear over a page either of Howells or James."

Both were accomplished artists, both advanced the American novel to a new position, but neither the one nor the other had any particular message to convey. In consequence the next generation had nothing but a dim respect for them as artists—no more.

James, like Anthony Trollope, has enjoyed a remarkable "come-back"



in the post-war years, especially among the intellectuals. His preoccupation with pure style has been discussed and written about, broadcast talks have been given, and many new editions of the works published. All this is probably part of an understandable nostalgia for a secure life and society.

## § 3

There is far greater human interest in the work of O. Henry and Jack London.

O. Henry (1862-1910) was the pen-name of William Sydney Porter, who began life as a bank cashier, was charged with embezzlement, escaped to South America, but finally surrendered to justice. The sentence was five years (1898-1903) in the Ohio Penitentiary. Being made night-warder in the prison infirmary, he passed the long hours of silence in writing tales, which appeared in the pages of various magazines. When he came out of prison he had already a public, and before the end of his short life he had turned out something like two hundred stories; with *Cabbages and Kings* (1904) and *The Four Million* (1906), he set an indelible seal upon the art of short-story writing, although the Sketch and Cross-Sections-of-Life schools of story-writers have tried hard to erase that seal.

O. Henry is one of the born story-tellers of the world. He is a master alike of tragedy, romance, and extravaganza, of tales of mystery or of common life, with especial skill in stories of the supernatural, such as *The Furnished Room*. Nothing can be more quietly realistic than *The Trimmed Lamp*, a tale of two city work-girls, the one who is all for having "a good time," the other for the things of the spirit; nothing more comic than *The Passing of Black Eagle*, in which a tramp with a gift of the gab becomes leader of a band of bandits and who vanishes in the very act of holding up a train; nothing more pathetic than *The Last Leaf*, the story of a sick girl's fancy that her life will fail with the falling of the last leaf from the tree outside her window, which her lover fixes with a bit of wire. Such are samples of a hundred stories which no other man could have invented, or could have related with such charm and magic of style.

Jack London (1876-1916) was born at San Francisco. He went as a boy to the Klondike gold-mines, shipped before the mast, travelled half over the world, and tramped in almost every state in the Union. He was an uneven writer, with an intense zest for life, a keen appreciation of everything masculine and vigorous, and a tender heart for both animals and men. His best book is *The Call of the Wild* (1903), a dog story of the Frozen North; yet *White Fang* (1906) comes not so far behind it.

## § 4

The charge of imitation that lay against American writers, and notably against American novelists, the charge of imitating European novels, was, as we have seen, not wholly confuted by even such talents as those of Henry James and William Dean Howells.

James had his models in Turgenev, in Flaubert, in George Eliot ; and Howells, though he enumerates many models in his youth, from Heine to Tolstoy, seems a sort of American Jane Austen. All literature is inter-related, and even Dante avowed the inspiration of Virgil and Brunetto Latini. But never was the charge less justified than in the American letters of to-day.

Beginning roughly with the third decade of the twentieth century, a burst of vitality made itself felt in American writing, of originality and power, so that perhaps for the first time since the coming of Walt Whitman, Europeans again became seriously interested in American books.

With the publication of *Main Street* by Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951), who won the Nobel prize in 1930, an amazing phenomenon appeared in American letters. A vast number of readers, hitherto preoccupied chiefly with the cheaper grade of made-to-order fiction, began to display interest in fiction of a different sort. They beheld in *Main Street* a picture, realistic, honest, sincere, even if somewhat one-sided, not of themselves, to be sure, but obviously of their next-door neighbours. It was a mirror held up not to their own nature, but to the nature very close to their own, which they instantly recognised as their near environment. And denizens of the small prosaic towns innumerable that fill the map of the United States, paused long enough from their cheap magazines and cheap reprints to buy and read a photographic, somewhat angrily satirical, but very sound novel depicting themselves. It was as though the Dark People of the Russian realists had suddenly emerged from their darkness to see themselves as the great Russian writers have painted them.

*Main Street*, one-sided though it be, created a genuine sensation in American fiction. It marked an epoch and a beginning. The old sentimentalities and beliefs left hanging as frayed ends and tatters from the days when a rude pioneer civilisation rigidly and blindly, of stern necessity, must needs regard every member of a sparse community as elect until he violated the code, were suddenly displayed with startling clarity, in garish relief. Pioneer days were ancient history. A new civilisation was crashing about their ears, with new ideas, ideals of culture and progress, and there they were in their little Gopher Prairies stewing in a stupidity that smelt to heaven. The Gopher Prairies and Sauk Centres, in a word, suddenly became self-conscious. Dimly they began to realise that however



good the salt of the earth may be in measure, it is useless as the sole article of diet—that salt, moreover, can produce absolute sterility, as in the well-known case of the plains of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The successor to *Main Street*, *Babbitt* was another revealing novel, similar, yet different in that it set forth humorously, gaily, ironically the mental and spiritual anatomy of what might be called the mean American, the average business man, the “mixer,” the “good fellow.” Any business man in America whose religion is “getting on” might read the book and wonder vaguely whether he is Babbitt. One can think of nothing in England with which to compare these two novels of Lewis’s, though portions of the work of both Wells and Bennett present similarities.

Edith Wharton (1862–1935), who began as a disciple of Henry James and his French literary forbears, went on writing novels which have less merit than *Ethan Frome* (1911) or *The House of Mirth* (1905; it rendered her famous), but which are distinguished work. Her novel of the 1914–1918 war, *A Son at the Front*, is one of her very finest. Originality was never Edith Wharton’s salient characteristic, but scrupulous care always. She is never slipshod or cheap, and though a cold unemotional light illumines most of her work, like winter moonlight, she is never gushing or tawdry. Her work, with some exceptions, is confined to depicting the life of America’s “Idle Rich,” those fine flowers of its peculiar plutocracy, whose spores, oddly, always come up as weeds. She has described them admirably, their history, morphology, and mating, and her work is the standard fictional contribution to the subject.

In England she has a vague parallel in May Sinclair (a very distinguished novelist and short-story writer, who deserves to be much better known than she is), though her great prototype was, of course, Henry James. But despite the fact that she is of the older persuasion of American novelists, she is in a manner the first ironist at the expense of that gilded age of American history, just then closing, that followed the Civil War. Edith Wharton was the first to bring a cold, impersonal, and consistent light of irony upon the top layer of an acquisitive society. The revolt now is in full cry. But in her manner, by no means the full-throated manner of to-day, she was a pioneer.

Theodore Dreiser (1871–1945), a cruder, more formless sort of realist than Edith Wharton, descended further down into the pits of life for his characters and studies, but in a sort they are contemporaries and colleagues. Where Edith Wharton followed the elegant French realism of Henry James, so dexterous of fence, so sophisticated, polished, Dreiser turned spontaneously toward the naturalism that in Hamlin Garland, Frank Norris, and Stephen Crane marked the protest against James’s exquisiteness, against Howells’s avoidance of “dire-catastrophe.”



The simple, non-introspective type of American money-maker, the Cowperwood of *The Financier* and *The Titan*, who moves across the scene of his exploits like some powerful animal, elemental, single-purposed, single-minded, to his goal of wealth, is the ideal character for Dreiser's pen. With a mass of detail, crude, almost unselected, Dreiser crowds his chronicle of the financier in much the spirit that he depicts the fallen women "Sister Carrie" and "Jennie Gerhardt."

These are of life, he seems to say, of the turgid moving mass of American life as much as, and more a part of it than the "vacancy and tiresomeness" approved by Howells and the Bostonians. And this rugged honesty brings to Dreiser's work a certain largeness and dignity, a certain seriousness that appears more Russian than American, a tone of authority that only genius can bring forth. Dreiser's best novel is *An American Tragedy* (1925).

Dreiser's contemporary and fellow-Indianian, Booth Tarkington, leapt into best-sellerdom with *The Gentleman from Indiana*, and looms very large in American popular esteem. In some respects he has a popularity reminiscent of Mark Twain's. He is versatile, adroit, with a flexible attractive style, and he possesses the gift of humour, more prized by the larger American public than any other gift. He is also a playwright and something of a publicist.

In his fiction he has been accused by critics of catering too consistently to sentimentality, of swallowing the prevailing Indianian, indeed American, spirit of "boosterism" almost whole. Mr. Van Doren has called him "the perennial sophomore."

## § 5

The new epoch in American letters, and notably in American fiction, is fitly signalled by the appearance of Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*. But no epoch, literary or otherwise, commences at a certain date or at a certain hour precisely, upon the striking of a clock. It grows out of much, out of all, that has gone before. Literature in particular is a web, irregular in texture, shot with golden threads or blurred by dull spots, but still a continuous fabric unfolding.

Just as Edith Wharton, Dreiser, and Tarkington were writing before Lewis and Sherwood Anderson, so others wrote, so many another contributed his thread to the weaving, and shades of difference were already visible long before James and Howells laid down their pens.

Hamlin Garland was one of the first to revolt against the bright and smiling pictures of the America of the gilded age, against the false romanticism that fictionists embroidered upon the stern reality of life on



the borders, on the prairies, on the western frontier. The restlessness so often visible in ex-soldiers of the last war was no less common among veterans of the Civil War. Hamlin Garland's father was such a restless spirit, to whom the distance always beckoned, after his homecoming. And as Garland has well recounted in his *A Son of the Middle Border*, the father moved the family first from Wisconsin to Iowa and then to the bleakness of the Dakotas, and always there was a fresh start in a barren country abounding only in soil and fertility but in nothing else indispensable to men.

For whatever hopes and ambitions that country may have held out as encouragement, it certainly held nothing for anyone with ambitions toward learning or art, with hopes of culture or cultivated society. The hardships, the numbing toil, the almost maddening solitude constituted Garland's themes in such early books of grim realism as *Main Travelled Roads*, *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, and *Prairie Folks*. His books shattered many of the illusions upon which prospective pioneers are fed, and, in their day, a generation ago, created what amounted to a sensation. The sanctity, the freedom, the beauty of pioneer life was one of the necessary myths created in a country in need of new and constantly increasing numbers of settlers. Garland's assault was something in the nature of an attack on vested interests, always a bold and temerarious undertaking in America. He attracted to himself a very considerable degree of attention.

## § 6

James Branch Cabell (1879-1958) is a writer of signal originality and marked resistance to classification. His adhesion to the fantastic philosophical romance is unique in America. There is in him something of Voltaire and something of Maurice Hewlett, but very much more of himself. His very titles, *Figures of Earth*, *The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck*, *Domnei*, in a measure indicate his preoccupation.

"He is an imagist in prose," declares H. L. Mencken (1880-1956), the famous American critic, essayist, satirist, and trenchant recorder of American English. "You may like his story and you may not like it, but if you don't like the way he tells it there is something the matter with your ears. As for me, his experiments with words caress me, as I am caressed by the tunes of old Johannes Brahms. How simple it seems to manage them—and how infernally difficult it actually is."

It was not until the publication of *Jurgen*, however, in 1919, that Cabell attracted a wider attention. *Jurgen* is many things, a romance, a



prose-poem of gallantry, a fantasy, an odyssey of the human soul in quest of romance and beauty. But for some reason it drew upon itself the displeasure of one Sumner, the current embodiment of Comstockism in America, and was "suppressed." At once collectors began to seek it and pay fancy prices for it. A court of law has since released the book from duress and it may now be had at the normal price. But the imprisonment of the book brought long-deferred celebrity to its author. For despite his medium, he is of the present movement of dissatisfaction. Though his matter be poetic romance of an imaginary land, rich with reading and burdened with allusion, it yet expresses dissatisfaction with present-day life and conditions. He seeks "escape" from life, but rather in the manner of Rabelais and Cervantes than in that of his lesser contemporaries.

Winston Churchill, though he has written with great financial success, is never included with the first group of American writers. When historical novels were the fashion, Churchill could match the best of sellers with *Richard Carvel* (1890), with *The Crisis*, and with *The Crossing*. With the subsidence of the historical novel he braced himself to other tasks. With zeal and earnestness he tackled politics, the church, woman, but somehow the meed given to the highest has always been withheld from him by critics.

Upton Sinclair, a radical, a Socialist, a reformer, was widely known by one novel, *The Jungle*, published in 1906. And yet Sinclair (born in 1878) was one of the most voluminous writers in America. Had Upton Sinclair possessed humour and imagination as he did zeal and sincerity, he might easily have been an American H. G. Wells. Even as it is, his novels and other writings, economic, sociological, polemical, are touched with a fervour that at times looks very much like genius. But a fervent Socialist writing in modern America, assaulting the interests that Sinclair is always assaulting, must be a very great genius indeed to triumph. And he is scarcely that. However well-meant may be his novel, *They call me Carpenter*, no one could call it a work of genius.

Likewise, there are such novelists as Ellen Glasgow, Ernest Poole, William Allen White, Henry B. Fuller, Gertrude Atherton, Zona Gale, Susan Glaspell, who was also a challenging dramatist, and Mary Austin, all of whom have been respected by critics, and in varying degrees by the public.

Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941) is another of America's modern realists, more discussed than read, but with a definite standing and position. Two representative novels are *Marching Men* (1917) and *Dark Laughter* (1925); he is still better known for his volumes of short stories, especially *Ohio* (1919), *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921), and *Horses and Men* (1921). He has a method of his own that might be described as unvarnished candour, but differing markedly from Theodore Dreiser. He is briefer, more



selective. His objectivity is more coloured with the personality of the observer. His inner cry is against the disorder, confusion, futility of modern American life. Like H. G. Wells, he abhors that confusion. He is shocked to observe "how men, coming from Europe and given millions of square miles of black fertile land, mines, and forests, have failed in the challenge made to them by fate and have produced out of the stately order of nature only the sordid disorders of man." And that sad shortcoming in human nature troubles many American writers to-day. He offers no solution. He presents the disorder, the confusion, the dumb longing for better things. He is simply an element in the general revolt. The pioneer dignity, he seems to say, has frayed out together with the pioneer spirit, and nothing fine has taken their place. That plaint is the heart and front of the general revolt.

Joseph Hergesheimer (1880-1954), while still a young man—as novelists go—was already a writer of distinction noted for painstaking artistry and acute observation. His style, a highly elaborated medium, and certainly over-decorative, appears to some tastes heavy. But his veriest short story displays almost the same careful workmanship to be found in such of his novels as *The Three Black Pennies*, *Java Head*, and *Linda Condon*. Decoration, the phrase, the rhythm of his prose are of greater moment to him than any unrest or moral preoccupation. His constant complaint is that women readers, with their craving for sentimentality, are a blighting influence upon the American fiction of the age. This supposed craving for sweets, however, has in no way adversely affected the success of the new realists.

## § 7

## MODERN FRENCH WRITERS

The most popular of modern French poets is Edmond Rostand, and his popularity owes not a little to the fact that Sarah Bernhardt produced his poetic dramas *La Princesse Lointaine* (1895) and *L'Aiglon* (1900). Rostand was born at Marseilles in 1868; he died in 1918. He was writing verses when he was eight, and his first book of poems was published when he was twenty-one. His first play, *Les Romanesques*, which has been translated and acted in English, was produced in 1894, and this was followed by *La Princesse Lointaine*, *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1898), *L'Aiglon*, in which the poet writes with fine sympathy of the unfortunate son of the great Napoleon, and *Chantecler* (1910), in which he rhapsodises over the Gallic cock as the

epitome of the spirit of France. In *Chantecler* there is an ode to the sun which is perhaps Rostand at his best. Here are the last lines :

Je t'adore, Soleil ! Tu mets dans l'air des roses,  
Des flammes dans la source, un dieu dans le buisson ;  
Tu prends un arbre obscur et tu l'apothéoses !  
O Soleil ! toi sans qui les choses  
Ne seraient que ce qu'elles sont !

Much less popular than Rostand but perhaps superior poets (Rostand was essentially a poetic dramatist), were Jean Moréas (1856-1912), of Greek birth ; Albert Samain (1858-1900) ; Tristan Corbière (1860-1887) ; Jules Laforgue (1860-1887), who, like Samain, was very much a symbolist ; and Charles Guérin (1873-1907), perhaps the most enduring, as he is the most moving, of these five.

During the nineteenth century, the French literary genius found its fullest expression in the novel, and this is equally true of the twentieth century. Of the elder of the modern writers, Anatole France, Romain Rolland and Pierre Loti are perhaps most interesting to foreign readers. The genius of Anatole France is comparable to that of the greatest of his predecessors. Even in his old age he continued to write with an amazing fertility of imagination, and he and Thomas Hardy were the two grand old men of European letters. Anatole France was the son of a poor Paris bookseller and was born in 1844. His real name was Thibaut, and he has said : " I was brought up amongst books by humble, simple people whom I alone remember."

Anatole France, the heir to the ironic tradition of Montaigne, Voltaire, and Renan, was a Parisian to the depths of his soul, an amiable cynical philosopher, believing neither in God nor man, a Socialist, and later the apologist of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, but with no great faith that Socialism or Communism can affect the essential irony of human life.

There is no doubt that all through his life Anatole France more or less agreed with the Abbé Coignard in his *La Reine Pédauque* (1893), who said that he would not have signed the Declaration of the Rights of Man " because of the sharply defined and unjust distinction made in it between man and the gorilla."

Anatole France was thirty-seven when he first became famous with the publication of his novel *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard*. This was followed by a long series of novels of which perhaps the most famous are the erotic Eastern story *Thaïs* (1891), the allegorical *L'Ile des Pingouins* (1908), *Le Lys Rouge* (1894), and the French revolutionary story *Les Dieux Ont Soif* (1911). Perhaps his genius is most apparent in his charming short story *Crainquebille* (1903) and in that masterpiece of irony, *L'Histoire Comique*



(in the same year). *Crainquebille* was an old costermonger who was arrested and sent to prison for a fortnight because he refused to move on when ordered by a policeman. He was waiting for the money for some leeks that he had sold, but the magistrate would not listen to him. When he came out of prison he found that his customers had gone to another hawker, and he grew poorer and poorer. In his despair, prison seemed the only possible shelter, so he grossly insulted a policeman, who only smiled and left him shivering in the rain.

Nowhere is the penetrating irony of Anatole France better exemplified than in *Penguin Island*. Saint Maël, after experiencing a great storm, lands on an island inhabited only by penguins. The good Saint follows his vocation and proceeds to baptize them. Since they are baptized they become human beings with souls, and so into men and women they are transformed. Saint Maël then proceeds to tow the whole Penguin Island across the seas to the Breton coast. Being human beings, the Penguins have to be clothed, and clothed they are. Then the holy Maël "was troubled in spirit and his soul was sad. As with slow steps he went towards his hermitage, he saw the little Penguins tightening their waists with belts made of seaweed and walking along the shore to see if anybody would follow them." And the good soul of Maël becomes sadder still, for the Penguins developed in human ways very rapidly as they began to get the idea of property, which begat other interesting notions.

*L'Histoire Comique* deals with the life of the Paris theatre, with its pettiness, its sham emotion, and its sordid intrigues. In the description of the funeral of the comedian Chevalier, Anatole France has written what is perhaps the greatest example of sustained irony in modern literature. The priest is singing the Requiem, and the mourners, the dead man's comrades, gossip under their breath.

"I must be off to lunch."

"Do you know anyone who knows the minister?"

"Burville is a has been. He blows like a grampus."

"Put me in a little paragraph about Marie Falempin. I can tell you she was simply delicious in *Les Trois Magots*."

The same kind of trivial conversation goes on while the actors follow the hearse to the cemetery. At the graveside the manager speaks the usual eulogy.

Grouped about the speaker in studied attitudes, the actors listened with profound knowledge. They listened actively, with their ears, lips, eyes, arms, and legs. Each listened in his own manner, with nobility, simplicity, grief, or rebelliousness, according to the parts which the actor was accustomed to play.

And when the eulogy was finished



The handkerchiefs were at work, wiping away the mourners' tears. The actors were weeping with all sincerity ; they were weeping for themselves.

Anatole France once said : " Let us give to men, for their witnesses and judges, Irony and Compassion," and though in his novels there is always irony, and sometimes bitter irony, the compassion is always there too. One of his most remarkable achievements is his long and detailed study of Joan of Arc, in which, sceptic as he is, he pays fine tribute to the best-loved saint of France. Anatole France is always lucid and he is always reticent. He detested the over-emphasis of a Zola, and the sensuality of his novels is an intellectual sensuality. He died in 1924.

Pierre Loti, the pen-name of Louis Marie Julien Viaud, was born in 1850 ; he died in 1923. He was brought up in an austere Protestant household, and he inherited the love of the sea which sent him into the navy when he was fourteen. The sea and the East were the formative influences in Loti's artistic life. He loved the sea as Joseph Conrad loved it, and this love is evident in all his novels, while his partiality for the East with its rather artificial and exotic idealism finds expression in his most famous novel, *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887), which, like two other famous novels (*Pêcheur d'Islande*, 1886, and *Les Désenchantées*, 1906), has been translated into English. His best realistic novel is *Le Roman d'un Spahi* (1881) ; this, too, has been translated. His seascapes and landscapes alike are masterpieces of descriptive writing ; his pen was tipped with a painter's brush. Loti himself said that his books were based on " a great effort to achieve sincerity, to be absolutely true." As for his style, Paul Bourget wrote : " No one has ever written like Loti save Loti." Henry Davray says of him : " Infinity, the mysterious beyond, had a ceaseless fascination for him, as it has for all souls imbued with love and melancholy. One theme is always to be heard sounding insistently in everything he wrote : the fleeting and transitory nature of life and death ineluctable and omnipresent."

Romain Rolland, who was born in Burgundy in 1866, received the Nobel prize in 1915. Before he wrote his great novel, *Jean Christophe*, which is in ten volumes (1904-1912) and certainly the longest novel in world literature, he had written interesting studies of the great composers ; he has also written a book about Tolstoy, of whom he is a very evident disciple, and several very subtle plays. *Jean Christophe* is an unhappy idealist, a German musician finding himself alien in his own Rhenish country, wearying of Teutonic sensibility, escaping to France only to find himself surrounded by a different sort of insincerity, struggling unsuccessfully for years, then at last finding fame but never happiness. *Jean Christophe* has been rightly called " the most remarkable work of contemporary fiction." Its hero set out to lead the good life, to do no injustice, and to think no evil,



and while Rolland has no illusions as to what must happen to a man of such ambition he emphasises Tolstoy's declaration that it is the only life worth living. The novelist himself was a confirmed internationalist. In the last years of his life he lived in Switzerland, and he was the one notable pacifist among prominent Frenchmen.

## § 8

The years before 1914 saw the development in French life, and consequently in French literature, of a new spirit entirely different from the spirit of nineteenth-century France and entirely different from the scepticism of Renan and Anatole France. As Madame Duclaux says, the generation that adored truth and justice and freedom was followed by a generation that adored courage, activity, self-control, and faith. This change of mood is strikingly evident in the novels of Ernest Psichari, Renan's grandson, who substituted militarism, Catholicism, and mysticism for his grandfather's pacifism, scepticism, and rationalism. Writing in 1914 Anatole France confessed that "scepticism has gone out of fashion." The new spirit found its expression most notably in the writing of Maurice Barrès (1862-1923), Charles Maurras, and Henri Bergson. Barrès never forgot that in 1870 as a child of eight he saw the German army violating the sacred land of France. The spark of hatred then kindled flamed up many years later in his novels, *Au Service de l'Allemagne* (1905) and *Colette Baudoche* (1909), and in other works of fervent patriotism, which without question played a large part in exciting the nationalistic energy that enabled France to endure the Great War and finally to play her large part in defeating the German armies.

One of the influences which indirectly led to it was the Bergsonian philosophy.

As far back as 1889, Henri Bergson had, at the age of thirty, published that epoch-making book *Données Immédiates de la Conscience*, which had led the reaction against Herbert Spencer's philosophy. In 1900 came his provocative little book on laughter; in 1907 his great work in *Creative Evolution*; in 1927 he received the Nobel prize for literature.

Bergson's intuitional method of reasoning, his distinction between mind and matter, his theory of vitalism laid such hold on the younger French writers that they hailed him as a prophet and his philosophy as a new gospel, and they read into it much more than the philosopher ever intended, for one of them cried: "I felt God on every page." Bergson, moreover, is a lucid, delightful writer.

Among the other French writers with reputations established prior to



the Great War of 1914-1918 whose names must at least be mentioned, are Rémy de Gourmont (1858-1915), the novelist, essayist, and very subtle critic of literature and morals; René Boylesve, the author of many charming stories of Touraine; Henri Bordeaux, the novelist of Savoy whose *romans du foyer* (fireside novels) are sufficient proof that the French have a popular literature that is the very converse of sensuous; René Bazan, described by Madame Duclaux as "full of faith and hope and charity," whose book *Charles de Foucauld* is an important addition to the literature of mysticism; and the poets Francis Jammes and Paul Claudel (1868-1955).

The novelist Charles Peguy wrote in *Éve*: "Blessed are they who die in great battles." Little did he think when he wrote those words how soon that blessedness would be his. On the outbreak of the Great War, he was a man of forty and the father of a struggling family: yet he changed at once from the Territorials to an active service regiment, and was killed at the battle of the Marne, one of nine hundred French writers of some degree of eminence who lost their lives in the war. "No war," said Paul Bourget, "can ever have inspired the written testimony of the fighters to such a degree as the war of 1914." Little of this literature perhaps has much permanent value, but the war novels of Henri Barbusse (1874-1935) and Georges Duhamel are an important addition to French literature.

*Le Feu* (1916) by Barbusse is one of the greatest war books produced in any country. The author was one of the very few in the heart of the tempest to whom it was given to record precisely, faithfully, in burning words which must endure, the terrors that they saw.

Before the Great War, Barbusse had been practically an unknown writer. His two volumes of poems, *Pleureuses* (1895) and *Les Suppliants* (1900), a collection of short stories, *Nous Autres* (1914), and an earlier novel, *L'Enfer*, had not been widely read.

When the war broke out, though a pacifist, over military age, and in delicate health, he enrolled as a volunteer and demanded to be sent on active service, for he believed that he was engaging in a war to kill war. Readers of *Le Feu* and of his later novel, *Clarté*, will see that he was soon bitterly disillusioned. *Le Feu* is the most powerful indictment of war ever written. Barbusse depicts its hideousness with the intense realism of which only a Latin or a Russian is capable. He relates facts in their naked brutality.

And when he has recourse to metaphor, it is always powerful and convincing: thus he compares a bursting shell to the terrific spitting of a volcano, gathering its saliva in the entrails of the earth (*Le crachement effroyable d'un volcan qui s'amassait dans les entrailles du monde*).

The profound impression created by this masterpiece of war literature encouraged Barbusse to republish his earlier work, *L'Enfer*. Hell is witnessed



by a young boarder in a Parisian boarding-house, who finds a chink in the wall of his room through which he can look into the adjoining chamber. The book is the most audacious and the most gruesome of the century. Its earnestness and its freedom from prejudice drew high praise from Anatole France, who wrote, "here at length is the book of a man," and from Maurice Maeterlinck, who saw in those pages a work of genius. *L'Enfer* does, indeed, contain many a powerful passage of deep insight and profound import. But regarded as a whole, it is too ghoulish, and it stresses far too strongly the sexual side of life.

In *Clarté*, which appeared about the time of the Armistice in 1918, Barbusse interweaves with a slight thread of plot the development of those pacifist theories in which the war had confirmed him. The title of the book gave its name to a pacifist society, of which its author was the leading spirit.

Though originally a man of science and a doctor of medicine by profession, Georges Duhamel (born in 1884) was beginning to be known as a man of letters before the war of 1914-1918. He had published two volumes of poems, *Élégies* and *Compagnons*, two plays produced at the Odéon, *La Lumière* and *Dans l'Ombre des Statues*, and one at le Théâtre des Arts, *Le Combat*.

But the two greatest of his war books, *Vie des Martyrs* (1914-1916) and *Civilisation* (1914-1917), were the works that won him prominence. Like Barbusse, Duhamel possesses the art of describing what he sees; but he sees it from a different angle. He has more sense of balance and proportion. His descriptions, though equally realistic, are less lurid. Barbusse, apostle and social reformer, is confident that mankind will be regenerated by conversion to a certain creed, that of pacifism. Duhamel, poet, dreamer, philosopher, man of science, sceptic, has little faith in mankind's regeneration, at least in this æon of time; his fame, however, is likely to outlast that of Barbusse.

## § 9

One of the most important events in the history of contemporary French fiction has been the appearance of the remarkable novel by Marcel Proust entitled *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. The first part *Du Côté de chez Swann*, appeared in 1914, when its author was forty-two. Immediately the reading public was divided into two hostile camps: Proustians and anti-Proustians. The former were most numerous abroad, in this country and in Holland. But even here not everyone could admire the long subtle sentences and the interminable descriptions—six pages to analyse a woman's smile. We once heard a gifted young English novelist



exclaim to a friend : " What, you have been reading Proust ! How priggish of you ! " But perhaps in this case it is better to be priggish than prejudiced ; for Proust is worth reading if only you have the patience. And many of his pages require no patience at all ; for he could, when he chose, give the essence of a human emotion in three lines ; and in strong, clear, indelible strokes, he could draw the narrow bourgeois life as it is lived in a small French provincial town. Proust lived to see the publication of three more volumes of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* : *A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleur*, *Le Côté de Guermantes*, and the first part of *Sodome et Gomorrhe*. These books show a man who, in middle age, recovers the sensations of his childhood and his youth, reviving with them the memory of the places and the people where and with whom those early years were passed. When Proust died in November 1922, he left ready for publication four volumes to complete the series, including the rest of *Sodome et Gomorrhe* and two others, *La Prisonnière* and *Albertine Disparue*, also the last part entitled *Le Temps Retrouvé*.

What will be the verdict of posterity on this voluminous work, more obscure than Meredith's, but no less delicate and distinguished, is one of the literary enigmas of the future.

With the poet Émile Verhaeren (1855-1916), who, Belgian patriot though he was, enjoyed a far greater popularity in Germany before the Great War than in his own country, Maurice Maeterlinck stands for modern Belgian literature. Verhaeren's powerful work covers the period, 1895-1908, and this poet is more typically Belgian than is Maeterlinck. But Verhaeren had a predecessor : Rodenbach (1855-1898), for, though born in the same year, Rodenbach preceded Verhaeren in the field of poetry by a decade. He is also more decidedly Flemish. Contemporary with these two writers was the novelist Lemonnier (1844-1913), who was almost as audaciously realistic and powerful as his French counterpart, Zola ; and, like Zola, he on several occasions clashed with the authorities on moral grounds. He was, however, not a purveyor of pornography. Maeterlinck had a world-wide popularity, largely on the strength of his fantastic play *The Blue Bird*, but he writes in French and his culture is almost entirely French, and his work may therefore be fairly considered with that of the modern writers of France. Maeterlinck was born in 1862. His first book, a volume of lyrics called *Serres Chaudes*, was published in 1889. The poems, which show the influence of Verlaine and Poe, have been translated into English verse by Bernard Miall. The following, called *Prayer*, is characteristic:

A Woman's fears my heart control :  
 What have I done with these, my part,  
 My hands, the lilies of my soul,  
 Mine eyes, the heavens of my heart ?



O Lord, have pity on my grief :  
 I have lost the palm and ring, alas !  
 Pity my prayers, my poor relief,  
 Cut flowers and fragile in a glass,

Pity the trespass of my mouth,  
 And things undone, and words unsaid ;  
 Shed lilies on my fever's drouth,  
 And roses on the marshes shed.

O God ! The doves whose flights are gold  
 On heavens remembered ! Pity too  
 These garments that my loins enfold,  
 That rustle round me, dimly blue !

Maeterlinck has written plays ; of which *Pelleas and Melisande* (1892), that strangely moving drama, *Monna Vanna* (1902), *The Blue Bird* (1909), and the very beautiful *Mary Magdalene* (1913) are the best known. He is the author of a delightful *Life of the Bee* (1901 ; he was himself an enthusiastic bee-keeper), of a no less delightful *Life of the White Ant* (1921), and of volumes of essays called *The Treasure of the Humble* (1896), *Wisdom and Destiny* (1898), and *Death* (1913). In his plays Maeterlinck is a symbolist. His philosophy, expounded both in his plays and his essays, is the mysticism derived at least in part from Swedenborg. *The Blue Bird*, for instance, stands for truth, without which happiness is impossible, and it is interesting to remember that Swedenborg said that the birds of the heavens signify truth. The quest for happiness is always vain to those who cannot find it in their own souls. Tytyl and Mytyl only discovered the secret after returning from their long search to find their pet bird was blue. "We went so far and it was here all the time." Maeterlinck's mysticism is always moral. To quote Miss Una Taylor, he is concerned with "the search for God in nature by a path of humility and love ; the search for God in man under whose beggar rags Maeterlinck descries the gleaming of the divine raiment."

## § 10

## MODERN GERMAN WRITERS

With the death of Goethe a great era in German literature came to an end. Carlyle regarded the school of romantic writers, of whom Johann Ludwig Tieck, novelist, dramatist, and essayist ; Novalis, the pen-name of Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772-1801), a poet ; and Jean Paul Richter, the novelist who had been compared to Sterne, are perhaps the most

conspicuous, as Goethe's successors. But it was on Heinrich Heine, by far the most important German poet of the nineteenth century, that, as Matthew Arnold has said, "incomparably the largest portion of Goethe's mantle fell." Tieck and the brothers Schlegel (Friedrich wrote brilliantly upon European literature, especially Shakespeare) were the deliberate inceptors of the romantic movement in Germany. Novalis was a novelist as well as a poet. Richter was the creator of the sentimental prose idyll in Germany; his best work appeared in the 1790's.

Two romantic novelists deserve mention: Chamisso (1781-1838), who was also a poet; E. T. W. Hoffmann. The latter, a decadent, exploited the supernatural—the gruesomely supernatural—yet a few of his tales are masterpieces. Chamisso wrote some fine lyrics and some exotic novels; his best novel, however, was *Peter Schlemihl* (1814)—on the ingenuous theme of a man that sells his shadow to the Devil.

And four more romantic poets: Ludwig Uhland (1787-1862), Joseph von Eichendorff (1788-1867), Nikolaus Lenau (1802-1850), and Eduard Mörike (1804-1875). Uhland excelled in the ballad, but he was also very good in lyric. Eichendorff produced what is "perhaps the most successful specimen of German romantic fiction, and as a lyric poet . . . he approaches Schiller and Bürger" (Waterhouse). In Lenau's poems, published in 1832, there is a combination of romantic melancholy and a longing for the great plains of his native Hungary. Mörike wrote several notable prose works, and as a poet "he is as limpid as Eichendorff and Uhland at their best . . ., but he has a tenderness all his own and a depth coupled with simplicity found elsewhere only in Goethe" (Waterhouse).

Heine was a Jew, born at Düsseldorf in 1797. His childhood was passed in the years of Napoleon's greatest glory, and throughout his life, like many of his German contemporaries, he held the Emperor in the highest veneration, in his case mainly because he had freed the Jews from many of their political disabilities. After an unsuccessful attempt at business success, Heine became a student of the University of Bonn. As a young man he was vastly affected by the teaching of the philosopher Hegel. His first poems were published in 1821. In these early years, Heine's life was made comparatively easy by the generosity of his uncle, to whom he owed long holidays where he learned the love for the sea, which he felt more acutely and expressed more completely than any other German poet.

In 1827 Heine paid a visit to England, which he cordially detested. "I might settle in England," he once said, "if it were not that I should find there two things, coal-smoke and Englishmen; I cannot abide either." He hated "British narrowness." He met Cobbett, whom he called "a chained cur, who falls with equal fury on everyone whom he does



not know, often bites the best friend of the house in his calves, barks incessantly, and just because of this incessantness of his barking cannot get listened to, even when he barks at a real thief."

Heine had become closely associated with the Young German Party, who were eager to establish Liberalism in the German States. After the fall of Napoleon, reaction had rioted throughout Europe and nowhere more than in Germany, and it was the aim of the Young German Party to restore the principles of the Revolution of 1789. To this end Heine had written his famous *Reisebilder*. But in 1830 the poet confessed that he had little hope for Germany or the German people. "What demon drove me," he said, "to write my *Reisebilder*, to edit a newspaper, to plague myself with our time and its interests, to try and shake the poor German Hodge out of his thousand years' sleep in his hole? What good did I get by it? Hodge opened his eyes, only to shut them again immediately; he yawned, only to begin snoring again the next minute louder than ever; he stretched his stiff ungainly limbs, only to sink down again directly afterwards and lie like a dead man in the old bed of his accustomed habits. I must have rest; but where am I to find a resting-place? In Germany I can no longer stay."

In 1831 Heine made his home in Paris. "The French," he said, "are the chosen people of the new religion, its first gospels and dogmas have been drawn up in their language; Paris is the new Jerusalem, and the Rhine is the Jordan which divides the consecrated land of freedom from the land of the Philistines." In 1834 Heine met Eugénie Mirat, a saleswoman in a boot shop, whom he married some years after. She was entirely uneducated and rather stupid, and his relations with her appear to have been very similar to Rousseau's relation with his kitchen wench. But Eugénie was good-natured, and the poet seems to have been comparatively happy with her. This connection with a Frenchwoman weakened his ties with his native country, which he only visited twice after he had settled in Paris. It should be mentioned that Heine had professed conversion to Christianity some years before. In Paris he acted as the correspondent of German newspapers and wrote his famous *Atta Troll*, which the poet called the "swan-song of the romantics," and in which he satirised the political verse of his time.

In 1848, the year of the Revolution, Heine was struck down by a paralytic stroke, and for eight years he lay helpless on his bed. He endured this living death with gay courage, carefully reading all the medical books that he could find which dealt with his malady. "What good this reading is to do me, I don't know," he said, "except that it will qualify me to give lectures in heaven on the ignorance of doctors on earth about diseases of the spinal marrow." During his years of pain Heine's genius indeed grew

clearer, finer, and more spiritual. His *Romancero* (1851), his *Neueste Gedichte* (1853), and the last work of all, the poems inspired by his ethereal passion for Camille Selden, have far more sincerity than his earlier writing. Heine died in 1856 and was buried at Montmartre.

*Romancero* contains many poems which tell of the poet's dignified disillusionment. For example, the following translated by Margaret Armour :

For thirty years, in Freedom's struggle glorious,  
I've taken part in many a hope forlorn.  
I knew that I could never be victorious,  
But wounded must return, and battle-worn.

I waked by day and night—there was no sleeping  
For me, as for the others in the tent  
(Their snores, good lads, did something towards keeping  
Slumber away, maybe, when I was spent).

I have known terror in those watches weary  
(For only fools have never been afraid),  
Then I would whistle mocking tunes and cheery,  
Until the fear that haunted me was laid.

Yes, I have stood on guard, alert and steady,  
And, if a doubtful character was seen,  
Have aimed, and the hot bullet that was ready  
Has found in his vile paunch a billet mean.

Yet, all the same, one cannot but confess it,  
Such scurvy fellows often understood  
The art of shooting—vain 'twere to suppress it.  
My wounds are gaping—ebbing is my blood.

Wide gape the wounds—the vacant post's bespoken !  
One falls, another fills his place and part  
But I have fallen unvanquished—sword unbroken—  
The only thing that's broken is my heart.

Poetic and dramatic contemporaries of Heine, who mocked at the romantics, and nineteenth-century successors, many of whom owed something to him, can be treated only very briefly. Nor can the novelists be ignored.

*Place aux poètes !* Gottfried Keller (1819–1890) was as much novelist as poet ; quantitatively, more so. Whether in verse or in prose, he displays artistry of style, skill in construction, a gift for narrative, a love of human nature, a penetrating yet kindly characterisation. Conrad Meyer (1825–1898) was another poet-novelist ; like Keller's, his work is not noticeably German.



A master within his limited range, he produced some highly polished prose stories and some superb historical ballads. Paul Heyse (1830-1914) likewise excelled in story-writing, and his poems show much lyrical talent. Detlev von Liliencron (1844-1909) was a straightforward, no-nonsense, open-air, patriotic poet and novelist, very much the soldier-sportsman. Richard Dehmel (1863-1920), in his first book of poems, "turned the stagnant lyric into the new, if dubious channel of passionate, sensual symbolism" (Gilbert Waterhouse)—a poetic genre that flourished in France and Germany from about 1890 until the advent of the First World War. "He has a superb sense of melody and rhythm, he can be simple and charming when he will . . ., he can produce startling reminiscences of Goethe and Heine, at least half his work is very fine poetry indeed, but the rest merely registers the oscillations of a diseased mind between the unintelligible and the Satanic." The remaining poets belong as much to the twentieth as to the nineteenth century. Stefan George (1868-1933); Hugo von Hofmansthal (1874-1929); Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), the greatest poet of this quartette and probably the greatest German poet since Heine; and Agnes Miegel (born in 1879). George was remarkable for the austere combination of strength with subtlety and delicacy. Rilke is extremely important but hard to assess (although William Rose's symposium, *Rainer Maria Rilke: Aspects of his Mind and Poetry*, is an excellent clarifier). His work covers almost a generation—1894-1923; six volumes appearing in the 1890's. A modest measure of fame came to him with *Stories of God*, 1900, and perhaps the best of his later work appears in *The Book of Pictures* (1902), *The Book of Hours* (1905), *New Poems* (1907-1908), *Requiem* (1912), and *Elegies from the Castle of Duino* (1923). Rilke "is nearer to George than to Dehmel, but his symbolism is warm, sensual, ductile, ecstatic, in comparison with the unyielding marble of George's imagery. The symbolism of George and Rilke is one aspect only of a kind of new romanticism" (Waterhouse). Hofmansthal was a more philosophical poet, who had achieved success by his twentieth year; a virile-romantic dramatist, and a fascinatingly penetrating writer of prose on philosophical and cultural themes. Agnes Miegel is perhaps the best of the German poetesses.

Then two great dramatists and two talented dramatists: Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872), C. F. Hebbel (1813-1863), Sudermann (1875-1928), and Gerhart Hauptmann (born in 1862)—the first and the last are the great. Grillparzer, an Austrian, had an unhappy life; from unhappiness and from the boredom of his Civil Service existence (1813-1856), he found relaxation, until 1838, in the writing of plays and then in other verse and in prose. By 1817, when his horrific, yet truly poetical tragedy, *The Ancestress*, was produced on the stage and he therewith became famous, German drama had, after Schiller's death in 1805 and Goethe's *Faust* (Part One:



1808), become stagnant; Grillparzer revitalised it, and Austrian drama led German literature for some twenty-five years. Grillparzer turned to Greek legend: "his *Sappho* excited the admiration of Byron; [*Waves of the Sea and of Love*, 1831] is the story of Hero and Leander; and the trilogy [*The Golden Fleece*, 1821], is probably the finest dramatic presentation of the Argonautic legend in the literature of the world" (Waterhouse). Besides several other remarkable tragedies, he wrote a charming and excellent comedy, *Woe to the Liar* (1838); its lack of success caused the dramatist to abandon drama—a pity, for German literature is significantly deficient in really good comedies. Like Marlowe, he was a poet-dramatist, but he had a keener sense of dramatic exigencies and fitness. "His contribution to German drama remains of superlative merit. . . . It would take a very able critic to establish in what respect his poetry, his psychology, or his stagecraft is inferior to [that of Schiller and Goethe]," as Gilbert Waterhouse justly says.

Grillparzer was a classical dramatist, despite his period; Hebbel is the forerunner of the naturalist dramatists, Sudermann and Hauptmann. For Hebbel, tragedy is not of fate but of some profound or violent psychological disturbance. His two most successful plays are *Mary Magdalene* (1843) and *Agnes Bernauer* (1852); his most ambitious, *The Nibelungs* (1862), in which he poses the conflict between waning Paganism and rising Christianity.

After writing a few novels, Sudermann turned, in 1889, to drama; *Honour*, in that year, gained for him an immediate success: a problem play, dealing with industrial conflict. *Home* (1893), another "problem," dealt with conflict in the family; its great part, that of Magda, has afforded scope to those two great actresses, Sarah Bernhardt and Eleanora Duse. Other notable works are *John the Baptist* (1898), *The Joy of Living* (1902), *The Song of Songs* (1908), *The Indian Lily* (1911), *The Mad Professor* (1926). Sudermann was rather the extremely competent playwright than the first-class dramatist—a Sardou, not an Ibsen.

Hauptmann, on the other hand, was the German version of Ibsen, by whom he was much influenced. Nevertheless, he is original; not as good a dramatist as Ibsen, but a fine poet, well represented in any adequate anthology of modern German verse, and one of the four most important novelists of 1890–1930. "Before he was thirty he had made a decisive success. Later in his career his plays took on a more romantic character," much of his early and some of his middle work being Zolaesque in their brutal realism; he "was awarded the Nobel prize for literature in 1912" (R. Farquharson Sharp). His earliest work appeared in 1885, and he was still a busy writer on the outbreak of the Second World War. His first great play, *The Weavers*, was staged in 1892. After a number of social-



problem plays, Hauptmann in 1914 broke new ground with *The Bow of Odysseus*; *The White Redeemer* (set in Mexico), 1920; and *Veland* (Germanic saga). "Hauptmann," as Gilbert Waterhouse has said, "can be as lavish with the sordid and the horrible as Zola or Tolstoy; he can be as morbid as Ibsen at his worst, but he shares Tolstoy's boundless pity for the poor and the oppressed. Unlike most of his contemporaries he can rise from the gutter to the sky, and he pursues unswervingly his own artistic ideals."

Between the chief works of Hebbel and those of Sudermann (whom he influenced) came those of Friedrich Spielhagen (1829-1911). Spielhagen, however, wrote problem-novels, not problem-plays: *Problematical Natures* (1860) lives up to its title; philanthropy, didactically yet realistically expressed, provides the theme of *Hammer and Anvil*; in *Storm Flood* (1876), the mad commercial speculation following the Franco-Prussian War is dissected; and in *Faustulus* (or *The Little Faust*: 1897) he returned to the fictionised psychology of *Problematical Natures*. He would bore present-day readers, for the very reason that he so faithfully recorded the sociological events and trends of his own time.

## § 11

The outstanding figure in German literature in the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, is Friedrich Nietzsche, who was born in 1844. He was appointed to a professorial chair in Basle University in 1869, but was compelled to resign, owing to continued ill-health, in 1879. Ten years later he became insane and he died at Weimar in 1900. He was, as Professor Robertson says, "a thinker in aphorisms and an artist in the handling of words." It is with the artist that we are here concerned, but his philosophy must be briefly summarised. He began as the disciple of Schopenhauer and the friend of Wagner, but he abandoned Schopenhauer's philosophy and quarrelled with Wagner, rejecting pessimistic resignation to things as they are to enunciate a truculent gospel for fundamentally changing society. He protests that men must choose between subjection to an ignorant short-sighted mob and subordination to the strong man, the superman—wise, resourceful, ruthless, who will rule his fellows for their own good. To him strength was the supreme virtue, weakness the supreme vice.

Nietzsche's most famous work is *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, in which in Oriental guise he summarises his teaching and elaborates the doctrine of the superman. *Thus Spake Zarathustra* is without question the greatest

book produced in Germany for half a century, even if it be regarded merely as a work of literary art. Here are some of the characteristic aphorisms :

Man is a rope slung between animal and superman.

What is the great dragon which the spirit is no longer inclined to call Lord and God ? "Thou Shalt" is the great dragon called. But the spirit of the lion saith, "I will."

Ye shall love peace as a means to new wars—and the short peace more than the long.

Ye say it is the good cause which halloweth even war ? I say unto you : it is the good war which halloweth every cause.

Man shall be trained for war and woman for the recreation of the warrior : all else is folly.

Thou goest to woman ? Don't forget thy whip !

That to the stronger the weaker shall serve—thereto persuadeth he whose will would be master over a still weaker one. That delight alone he is unwilling to forgo.

The earth hath a skin ; and this skin hath diseases. One of these diseases is called man.

He who cannot command himself shall obey.

Everything goeth, everything returneth ; eternally rolleth the wheel of existence. Everything dieth, everything blossometh forth again ; eternally runneth on the year of existence.

One of the most remarkable things about Nietzsche is that he to a considerable extent branched off from the main stream of German philosophy. Leibnitz (1646–1716) and Kant (1724–1804) owed much to the Jewish-Dutch Spinoza (1632–1677), whose greatest book, a treatise on ethics, is brilliantly argued—and is still closely studied. Though brilliant, Leibnitz lacked the profundity of Spinoza and of Kant, the most famous of all German philosophers. Kant's best-known work is his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781 ; enlarged edition, 1787), although he wrote more than merely notably on ethics and religion. Then came three philosophers who both influenced and were influenced by Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, and the romantics : J. G. Fichte (1762–1814), G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) ; of these Fichte, a devoted admirer of Kant, is the least known in the English-speaking countries, Hegel is the highest-flying (despite the abstruseness of the subjects on which he wrote so eloquently), and Schopenhauer the most faithful mirror of his age. Melancholy by nature and embittered by the mostly imagined rivalry of Hegel, he lived restlessly and unhappily ; nevertheless, *The World as Will and Idea* (1819) remains a widely read philosophical work, and it was he who most influenced Nietzsche.



## RUSSIAN WRITERS

Russian literature can hardly be said to have existed before the middle of the Eighteenth Century or to have, with Pushkin and Gogol, come to maturity before 1830. But even the most summary concision would be inadequate without at least a terse reference to the work of Michael Lomonosov (1710-1765), Gavriilo Derzhavin (1743-1816), Nicholas Karamzin (1765-1826), and Ivan Krylov (1768-1844). Except for some early poems, Lomonosov's writings were mainly historical and philological; he is "notable as having furnished by his writings the linguistic model followed by modern Russian literature, in that he evolved a convenient literary language which contained the most useful elements of both the elaborate 'Church Slavonic' and the colloquial spoken Russian of his day" (R. Farquharson Sharp). Derzhavin was a poet and, in his day, an excellent influence. The much-travelled Karamzin, on the other hand, was an historian: his *History of the Russian State* (ten volumes, 1815-1824) rendered him deservedly famous. Krylov, having written some unsuccessful comedies, turned to the fable; he is Russia's best fabulist. Beginning with translations of La Fontaine, he composed numerous original fables, of which the first edition consisted of two series, published in 1809-1811; they became exceedingly popular, and he added to them as new editions were demanded.

The earliest of the great Russian imaginative writers is N. V. Gogol (1809-1852). He was born at Poltava, and educated at the Niezhin gymnasium, where he started a manuscript periodical, *The Star*. Thence he went in 1829 to St. Petersburg, where he tried the stage, but failed. Then he became a clerk in a government department. But it was in literature that he found his true vocation. In 1829 he published an idyll, *Hans Kuchel Garten*, which was so ridiculed that he bought up all the copies available, and burnt them in an inn-room which he hired for the purpose. But, personally encouraged by Pushkin—an earlier story-teller and poet (1799-1837), of great charm, naturalness, and narrative and lyrical talent, famous especially for his tale, *The Captain's Daughter* (1836), for *Boris Godunov* (1831), and for *The Queen of Spades* (1834), who afterwards influenced Tolstoy and some of whose poems have been delightfully translated by Oliver Elton—Gogol wrote *Evenings in a Farmhouse at Dikanka*, a story told by an old bee-keeper and full of folk-tales, legends, traditions, and descriptions of the charming life of Little Russia. Gogol's keen fantastic humour is one of his great merits. These books were followed by *Stories of Mirgorod* and *Taras Bulba*. The latter is a prose epic: a tale of an old Cossack chief

and his two sons, and of warfare between the Cossacks and the Poles. Later on, Gogol became a realist and a pioneer of realism in Russian literature. *The Overcoat* is the pitiful story of a poor clerk, who after much difficulty obtains a winter overcoat, which is at once stolen from him, plunging him into dejection from which he dies. This kind of realism became a root of Russian fiction. Sympathetic portrayal of the despised and rejected, and kindly sympathy for comic, pathetic, and grotesque people, has ever since been a main theme of Russian novels.

Gogol's greatest novel is *Dead Souls*. The hero is a thorough rascal, who avails himself of some legal peculiarities of serfdom to devise an ingenious method of borrowing money on fictitious security. In the course of his peregrinations in pursuit of his plan he meets all sorts of typically queer serf-owners, who supply ample material for Gogol's vigorous humour.

Between Gogol and Turgenev comes Ivan Goncharov (1812-1891), whose chief novel is *Oblomov* (1854) but who wrote at least two others that have been translated into English—*A Common Story* (1847) and *The Precipice* (1868).

Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883) was one of the first Russian writers to reach maturity and attain European celebrity. No Russian writer is more artistic, or such a consummate master of literary form. His first important work, *A Sportsman's Sketches*, 1852, was not only beautifully written, containing wonderful descriptions of scenery, but by its lifelike presentation of Russian serfs it assisted the emancipation movement. This secured its author the enthusiastic appreciation of progressive Russian society. It was followed by *Rudin*, *A House of Gentlefolk*, *On the Eve*, *Fathers and Sons*, *Virgin Soil*, and *Clara Milich*. These supply a series of studies of the various movements of thought and feeling in Russia during the thirty years of Turgenev's literary activity. *Fathers and Sons* brought the word "Nihilist" into general use. Here is the passage in which it occurs :

"Well, and what is Mr. Bazarov himself?" asked Paul Petrovich deliberately.

"What is Bazarov?" replied Arkadi, with a chuckle. "If you like, uncle, I will tell you just what he is."

"Be so kind, nephew."

"He is a Nihilist."

"What?" asked Nicholas Petrovich, and Paul Petrovich raised his knife in the air with a bit of butter on its point, and remained motionless.

"He is a Nihilist," repeated Arkadi.

"Nihilist!" uttered Nicholas Petrovich. "That is from the Latin word 'nihil,' nothing, as far as I can judge. Therefore the word implies a man who . . . who acknowledges nothing."

"Say rather, who respects nothing," put in Paul Petrovich, and again began buttering his bread.



"Who deals with everything from a critical point of view," remarked Arkadi.

"And isn't that all the same?" asked Paul Petrovich.

"No, it is not all the same. A Nihilist is a man who doesn't bow before any authority, who doesn't accept any principle on trust, no matter with what respect that principle may be generally regarded."

"Well, and is that good?" interrupted Paul Petrovich.

"That depends on opinion, uncle; to one man it is good, to another it is bad. . . ."

"There used to be Hegelists, and now there are Nihilists. We will see how you will exist in vacuum, in an airless space."

Turgenev had a wonderful mastery of the beautiful Russian language, as is particularly well shown in his last work, *Poems in Prose*. Some of his shorter stories are among his best, such as *The Torrents of Spring*, one of the world's great masterpieces in the art of fiction. His charming play, *A Month in the Country*, should also be mentioned. Turgenev lived for many years in Paris, where he was the friend of Zola, Flaubert, and Daudet.

Born in the same year as Turgenev, but dying in 1841 at the age of twenty-three, Michael Lermontov was yet a distinguished novelist (*A Hero of Our Own Times*, 1840) and a fine poet (*Poems*, 1840); some of his work appeared posthumously. Both *A Hero* and *The Demon* (1856) have been translated into English.

F. M. Dostoevsky (1822-1881) was an extraordinary genius whose life was so crowded with misfortune that it is a marvel his powers ever developed. His sympathy for the oppressed and despised is wonderful, and his power of penetration into the inmost recesses of human minds—especially diseased and unbalanced minds—is so uncanny that though much of his work was done at high pressure for daily bread, and he cannot in some of his books be relied on to get safely to his journey's end, portions of his writings are equal to anything ever written, and there are critics of high repute who would place him first among Russian novelists.

He was always extremely poor, was epileptic, was condemned to death for attending some small Socialist gatherings, and actually endured four years' penal servitude in Siberia. After returning home he escaped abroad to avoid imprisonment for debt, and was bitterly attacked by Radicals for his distrust of the Socialist leaders, and by Conservatives for advocacy of the cause of the oppressed. His chief works were: *Poor Folk*, *Notes from a Dead House* (the outcome of his Siberian experiences), *The Oppressed and Aggrieved*, *Crime and Punishment* (a most remarkable work, said to have had a great influence on Nietzsche), *The Possessed*, *The Idiot*, and the unfinished *Brothers Karamazov*.

*Crime and Punishment* is one of the greatest realistic novels in all literature.



N. E. Shchedrin (1826–1889), often known as M. E. Saltykov, is remembered for one work—his novel, *The Golovlyov Family*. The Russians have always excelled at the fictional presentment of family life.

## § 13

Count Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), the greatest name in Russian literature, was born on the family estate at Yasnaya Poliana and educated at Kazan University. He fought in the Crimean War and was present at the storming of Sebastopol. He then retired from the army, and after travelling in Germany and Italy he married and settled down on his estates, where he wrote the long succession of books which have made his name world-famous. But about 1880 he resolved to hand over his property to his wife and family and to live like a peasant of the soil. Besides novels, he wrote first-rate essays and works of a philosophic, religious, and social character, which had world-wide circulation and influence, as well as a series of plays, which rank among the best of Russian dramatic work; so that, when his whole achievement is taken into account, he stands quite unrivalled.

His greatest novel is *War and Peace*, a very long work presenting the lives of several Russian families: a complete picture of Russian life during the period 1805–1820, which includes the story of the Napoleonic invasion. It is a marvellous production—a landmark no one can afford to miss who wishes to understand Russia or its literature. As Maurice Baring has said: "For the first time in an historical novel, instead of saying: 'This is very likely true' or 'What a wonderful work of historical reconstruction!' we feel that we were ourselves there, that we knew those people; that they are a part of our very own past." The novel has enjoyed a tremendous popularity in the post-war years, and many discerning critics regard it as the greatest novel in world literature.

*Anna Karenina* was a similarly great achievement, dealing with the Russia of 1876, and contrasting St. Petersburg life with life in the country. Its concluding chapters gave the first indication of Tolstoy's later absorption in religious and reformist activities. His last great novel, completed when he was over seventy, was *Resurrection*—confessedly a propagandist work designed to convey his views on the problems of life.

Among his short novels are: *The Kreutzer Sonata*, *Boyhood*, *Childhood*, and *Youth*, *The Two Hussars*, *Family Happiness*, *The Cossacks* (the fruit of his residence in the Caucasus as a cadet), *Polikushka*, *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, *Holstomer: the Story of a Horse*, *Master and Man*, and the posthumous *Hadji Murad* (which again deals with life in the Caucasus). Mention must also be made of the remarkable sketches of *Sevastopol*, which were the



outcome of his experience as an artillery officer during the siege of 1855-1856, and which have appealed to men who fought in France in the Great War as extraordinarily like their own experience. His wonderful little stories, collected in *Twenty-three Tales*,<sup>1</sup> are in their own way unparalleled. If the true criterion of art be, as Tolstoy declares in *What is Art?*, "brevity, simplicity, and sincerity," these short stories are as near perfection as anything in modern literature. They delight children making their first acquaintance with literature at the same time as they secure the admiration of great writers and critics.

In Tolstoy's remarkable work, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, written in 1889, he reverted to the idea of celibacy and chastity that is advocated by certain portions of the Christian world, the monastic orders, and some Oriental religions. The vigorous pronouncement of these views in an outspoken modern novel took the public so much by surprise that discussion and denunciation—not the less strenuous because the book was attractively written and of high artistic quality—was general and long-continued both in Russia and elsewhere.

Between Tolstoy's best work and Chekhov's comes the main body of work by three lesser but by no means negligible writers: Nicholas Leskow (1831-1895), novelist; Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900), primarily a philosopher but also something of an historian; and Vladimir Korolenko (1853-1921), novelist. Leskow, from some years' experience as assistant manager of a large country estate, gained an intimate knowledge—to be employed to advantage, later, in his novels—of peasant life. In his later years he was an ardent disciple of the doctrinaire Tolstoy. Of his novels, which cover the period 1863-1881, *Cathedral Folk* (1872) and *The Enchanted Wanderer* (1873) have appeared in English. Soloviev's chief works are *The Religious Foundation of Life* (1884), *A Modern Priestess of Isis* (1893), and *Three Conversations: War, Progress, and the End of History* (1899-1900); of these, the second and the third have been rendered into English; all three are provocative and stimulating. Korolenko spent from 1879 to 1885 in Siberia as a political prisoner; this and his knowledge of peasant life provided the setting of his novels, five of which (in addition to his *Siberian Tales*, 1901) have been translated into English: *The Murmuring Forest* (1886) and *The Blind Musician* (1888) being perhaps the best known, though *Bad Company* and *The Vagrant* are also very readable.

A. P. Chekhov (1860-1904), whose father had been a serf, was born at Taganrog, and studied medicine at Moscow. He wrote no long novels. As a short-story writer dealing with the intelligentsia he has no equal in Russian literature. He was also the author of six one-act farces and five

<sup>1</sup> *Twenty-three Tales* is not the name of any one work by Tolstoy, but of a collection of the best of his short stories in the *World's Classics* series of the Oxford University Press.



serious plays. His pieces when produced at the admirable Art Theatre in Moscow had great success. The originality of his work lay in his discovery that action is not necessary to ensure interest. It was thought that the lack of action in the plays would prevent their success on the stage, but it was found that they were fully as interesting as plays with a more dramatic plot. His chief pieces are *The Sea Gull*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Ivanov*, *Three Sisters*, and *Uncle Vanya*. He is certainly one of Russia's foremost dramatists, and has had a larger measure of success outside his own country than the exceptionally Russian nature of his theme—the tragi-comedy of frustration—would have led one to expect.

Before passing to Gorki, let us briefly consider one man—Fedor Sologub (1863–1927)—born earlier, and four men born a little later, than that picturesque and already legendary figure. Sologub's first book consisted of poems (1897); but most of his work consists of novels and stories, five of the former and three volumes of the latter having appeared in English: in short, he is, or should be, well-known to English readers. The four writers born after Gorki are Alexander Kuprin (b. 1870), Leonid Andreyev (1871–1919), Alexis Remizov (b. 1877), and Michael Artsibashev (1878–1927). Kuprin is a prolific novelist, and many of his novels have appeared in English, notably *The Shulamite* (1909), *The River of Life*, *A Slav Soul* and *The Swamp* (1912). During the Russian Revolution, he withdrew to France. Andreyev, during that revolution, withdrew to Finland; after a life of poverty he achieved success in 1899 and became both very prolific and, as he deserved, very successful; his works have been widely translated. Apart from Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, he is the most translated of Russian writers. Remizov, dramatist and poet, is likewise prolific; *The Clock* and *The Fifth Pestilence* exist in English translations. Like Kuprin, Remizov is an expatriate. Like Remizov, Artsibashev suffered for his political opinions. Before taking to novel-writing, he failed as painter and as draughtsman. Four of his books have appeared in English: *War* and *Tales of the Revolution* should be read by all those who are interested in these two engrossing subjects.

Maxim Gorki (1868–1936) is the most prominent figure in Russian literature of the twentieth century. The son of an artisan or petty trader, his mother a peasant-woman, he was orphaned at an early age. At twelve he ran away from home and got employment on a Volga river-steamer. After working as a baker, a street porter, and an itinerant apple-seller, he obtained a job as clerk at a lawyer's. In 1891 he wandered among tramps in South Russia, and in 1892 began writing short stories for a provincial newspaper. The remarkable quality of these stories, and his amazing rise from the lower depths, quickly secured for him a great reputation both in Russia and in the Western world.



*Malva Chelkask*, *Twenty-six Men and a Girl*, and other stories, rapidly became popular. His adulation of the "rebel"—the type that most appealed to him among the tramps he knew—found an echo in the minds of many readers weary of the dull mediocrity of respectable society and the absence of strong sensations in a monotonous reign of law and order. One of Gorki's heroines, Varenka Olesova, says: "The Russian hero is always silly and stupid. He is always sick of everything; always thinking about something that cannot be understood, and is himself so miserable, so mi-ser-able! He will think, think, then talk; then he will go and make a declaration of love, and after that he thinks and thinks again, and then he marries; he talks all sorts of nonsense to his wife, and then abandons her."

Gorki was not equally successful when he attempted longer novels. Neither *Foma Gordeev*, nor *The Three*, nor *The Orlovs* is as good as his short stories. As a playwright his work, *The Lower Depths*, based on his experience among the down-and-out, is most important. Gorki first rejected the Revolution, then accepted it and was exalted by the Soviet to first place among Russian writers.

With Gorki, a literary era came to an end. He is the last of the great writers sprung from the old Russia, except perhaps Dmitri Merejkowski, a great historical novelist, his two finest books being *The Death of the Gods* and *The Forerunner* ("The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci"). He also wrote a novel dealing with the Decembrist Revolt, *December the Fourteenth*. The post-revolution Russia is producing a literature of its own—probably merely the literature of a period of transition.

Sharing some of the same characteristics as those possessed by Russian literature is Polish literature, which, however, has always been sturdily independent. The nineteenth century witnessed the greater part of the lives, and most of the work, of a great poet, Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), and a great novelist, Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846–1916). Mickiewicz, an ardent patriot, travelled much and worked hard, yet he found time for some fine books, published during the period 1828–1838; his best-known book is *Pan Tadeusz* (1834), which has been translated into English. Sienkiewicz is much better known, outside his country, than his compatriot. His novels cover a long period (1872–1911), and a dozen of them have appeared in English. Among the dozen are *Bartek the Conqueror* (1882); *The Deluge* (1886); *Children of the Soil* (1895); *Quo Vadis?* (1895)—a magnificent historical novel, and his most famous book; *The Knights of the Cross* (1900); and *On the Field of Glory* (1907). Sienkiewicz was awarded the Nobel prize in 1905. He died as the result of over-exertion in the cause of Polish prisoners of war: he, like Mickiewicz and Paderewski, was a true patriot.



## MODERN ITALIAN WRITERS

Modern Italian literature, in the sense of literature adequately expressive of modernity, begins with Giacomo Leopardi (1798–1837), who bore so many points of resemblance to his exact contemporary Heine. Like Heine, he was in some ways a romantic and was both melancholy and bitter; having an even more distressing life than Heine, he was much more pessimistic than the German Jew. His chief prose works were aphorisms (*Pensieri*), dialogues (*Operette Morali*), and letters (*Epistolario*, covering the period from 1812 until his death), and philological essays and studies of very great merit (*Studi Filologici*); he was, in fact, a notable prose-writer, an accomplished philologist, an erudite scholar with an admirable style. But above all he is the greatest of all Italian poets since the Renaissance. Most of his poems—many, by the way, were in unrhymed verse—were songs (*Canti* and *Canzoni*) and odes; some, however, were lyrics, and these rank high in the annals of the European lyric in its narrower sense. “With him,” as St. John Lucas remarks, in reference to the wider sense, “the lyric reaches a climax of beauty never attained since Petrarch, a perfect union of idea and expression that forbids all analysis.” The same critic thus compares him with Carducci: “The union of the classic and the romantic is continued in Carducci, the last great poet of the nineteenth century, whose profound knowledge of his country’s literature has made every lover of Italy his debtor.” Another much more than merely competent critic, Lauro de Bosis, says of Leopardi that he “forms with Dante and Petrarch the great triad of Italian poetry. Leopardi’s poetry presupposes deep meditation and violent emotion, but both are entirely merged in the serene lucidity of poetical vision. . . . His despair stimulates our sense of life more than any hymn of joy.”

To revert to Italian romanticism. Only a few of the minor poets were romantic in the German or the English, the French or the Spanish way: of the major poets, Ugo Foscolo (1778–1827), the author of the famous prose *Last Letters of Jacopo Ortis* and of a poetical masterpiece, *The Sepulchres*, actually declared himself an enemy of romanticism; Manzoni combined it with classicism; and all the major, like many of the minor poets, owed something to Vittorio Alfieri (1749–1803), the one great Italian poet of the eighteenth century.

The failure of romanticism in Italy is perhaps to be explained in the main by the fact that “from 1830 to 1870 the great task of the *Risorgimento*”—that movement of Italian liberation in which Cavour was the politician and statesman, Mazzini the plotter and the publicist (*The Duties of Man*,



1858), and Garibaldi the soldier—"absorbed most of Italian energies. Literature became an instrument of the struggle. . . . Mameli and Berchet spurred the hearts of the fighters"; Giusti "satirised the oppressors and the subjected" (Lauro de Bosis); Giusti, true poet, is Italy's greatest satirist.

Then came a very short period of sentimental reaction, which Carducci, impetuous yet restrained, virile and vigorous, yet extremely cultured and polished, trenchantly and violently attacked.

Gabriele d'Annunzio (1863-1938) is by far the widest-known name in the literature of modern Italy. His first poems were published in 1880, when he was seventeen, and in them he showed himself the disciple of Carducci (1835-1907), who, although little read outside his own country, has been called the father of modern Italian literature. Carducci's most famous work is perhaps his *Hymn to Satan*, a pæan of rebellion against Christianity, which, in the poet's opinion, threatened the greatness of his country; but he will probably be ultimately remembered more for his lyrics and his odes, in which, as in his criticism, he shows himself to be a neo-classic, of great and authentic inspiration expressed in a marmorean perfection of form and in sheer witchery of metric power. Carducci is the greatest Italian poet since Leopardi, but his fame has, most unjustly, been overshadowed by that of d'Annunzio. He was also a great literary critic.

D'Annunzio was playwright, poet, and novelist. His poetry is weighted with trope and archaism, so erudite that it escapes pedantry only by its author's amazing vigour, and is hardly intelligible to foreigners. Greek, Latin, old Italian, mediæval French, and English influences have swayed him turn by turn, without ever subduing his essential quality. A hatred of middle-class convention, a thirst for Nature in her brutality as well as in her beauty, a Nietzschean will to domination and imperialism, above all a craving for every kind of exoticism, are the qualities of an artist who believed himself a man of action, and turned to art for that realisation of his dreams denied him by the society in which he lived.

Many of his novels—*Fire*, *The Triumph of Death*, *Giovanni Episcopo*—are known to English readers. Several of his plays, admirably translated by Arthur Symonds, reveal him as the creator of a new prose, sometimes beautiful, sometimes dull and overloaded. D'Annunzio's feats as an airman and his exploits in the Fiume episode are well known.

A revelatory contrast to d'Annunzio is Antonio Fogazzaro (1842-1911), a thoughtful though not a frigid poet; especially a restrained, dignified, philosophical, yet most sympathetic novelist—witness *The Saint*, a psychological masterpiece, and *Daniel Ortis*, his best-known story.

Giovanni Papini (1881-1956), critic, philosopher, and novelist, after many spiritual experiences, stood for his faith. The pre-1914 attempt in *The Memoirs of God* to view the cosmos from the point of view of its Creator,



has resolved itself into a *Life of Christ* (1920), the humble expression of a new-found Christianity, written for the benefit of a post-war society, since "in no time of which there is record has meanness been so mean, nor the drought so parching—our Earth is Hell illuminated by the condescension of the Sun."

The *Life of Christ* is a retelling of the Bible story with many comments. In a beautiful passage Papini emphasises the fact that Jesus was born and lived among the poor :

Those hands that were raised in blessing above the simple-hearted, that healed the leper, that shed light upon the eyes of the blind, that raised the dead, those hands that were pierced with nails upon the cross, were hands that had been bathed in the sweat of hard and strained labour, whereon rough toil had set its horny mark. They were hands that had held tools, had driven home the nail—the hands of a workman. Jesus laboured with matter before He toiled with souls.

The end of the great drama is told with reverence and the intense sense of drama that characterises the whole book. The incidental pictures of Jesus are generally fine and suggestive.

In his essays *Four and Twenty Minds* (1913) Papini shows that he has not the smallest respect for traditional judgments and traditional idolatries. Hamlet to him is merely "a fat neurasthenic, half evil and half imbecile," and Herbert Spencer, the philosopher, was nothing but "the pedantic Hamlet of a half intelligent and compromising bourgeoisie." For Nietzsche, Papini has intense admiration. "I declare to you that I do not know of another modern life nobler, purer, sadder, lonelier, more hopeless than that of Friedrich Nietzsche."

Without attempting any excursion into the domains of philosophy or criticism, reference must be made to Benedetto Croce (1866–1952). Signor Croce's range was vast and his position is European. His *Theory of Æsthetic* has revolutionised the critical thought of contemporary Europe. Indeed, Lauro de Bosis, writing in April 1931, could say that "The arbiter of present-day [Italian] culture is not a poet, as in the past, but a philosopher, Benedetto Croce. With him, however, philosophy has left the abstract regions to become the inseparable antecedent and the living critique of all aspects of life. Under his influence Italy has been in the van of the reaction to positivism and to-day is a leader in æsthetics, literary criticism, and the writing of history. Luigi Pirandello has revolutionised the theatre and Italo Svevo the novel, but the Poet of the Age is still to come." (Thus L. de Bosis, who died at the age of thirty, in 1931, during an aerial flight undertaken for the dropping of thousands of anti-Fascist leaflets on Rome and terminated by his being shot down by a pursuit plane—see "The Story of My Death," published in *The Times* of October 14, 1931. De Bosis is the editor of a very original anthology, *The Golden Book of Italian Poetry*



(Oxford University Press, 1932); the author of a fine dramatic poem, prophetically entitled *Icarus*; the brilliant translator of three Greek tragedies, of J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, and of two outstanding American novels of the 1920's. "He was the son of the poet, Adolfo de Bosis, translator of Shelley, himself a remarkable man." (G. M. Trevelyan)

## § 15

## SCANDINAVIAN WRITERS

Europe is more grateful to Scandinavia for Hans Andersen than for any other gift.

Hans Andersen was born on one of the Danish islands in 1805, the only child of a poor cobbler, who, however, seems to have longed for education, and to have done his best for his son; he used to read him *The Arabian Nights*. Andersen lived in his own life the story so beloved of all fabulists, of the underdog, sickly, derided, and scorned, who rose to such fame that on his seventieth birthday he was presented with a book containing one of his stories in fifteen languages. He was a dreamy, superstitious child, but far more observant than anyone guessed. To his excited imagination, there was nothing dead in all the world; everything talked and had its personality. So that in his stories flowers had human life, and a shadow, and a darning-needle, a shilling, the moon, a fir-tree, a duckling, and the old street lamp.

Hans lost his father in the Napoleonic Wars, and his mother soon married again. As the boy apparently loved playing with his little model theatre, and dressing dolls for it, they apprenticed him to a tailor, and then put him into a cloth factory. He ran away from here, and when he was fourteen, though he was still full of great ideas for his future, he could scarcely write. He begged his mother to let him try his fortunes in Copenhagen; and because of the words of a soothsayer, she consented. "Your son will become a great man," had said the old woman, "and in honour of him Odense will one day be illuminated."

Arrived in the capital, Hans made fierce attempts to make his way on the stage, but he was everywhere taken for a lunatic. But first Siboni, the director of the Academy of Music, and then Goldburg, the poet, befriended him, and gave him shelter and education. The shy, emotional, ungainly boy began to be recognised as a poet; his rebuffs were by no means over, but they lessened. Critics were, on the whole, unfavourable; but in 1833 a travelling pension from the king brought him a little peace. He published many poems, sketches of travel, two or three novels and romantic dramas, and in 1840, his *Picture Book Without Pictures*. He visited England, Italy,



and the East. In 1844 a visit to the court of Denmark was productive of an annuity. *Tales for Children* and *The Wild Swans* and *The Ice Maiden* were published in 1861 and 1863. He was greatly honoured by his countrymen, and awarded the Grand Cross of the Dannebrog Order—these incidents are pleasant to relate, for the sake of their contrast with the obscure, unhappy childhood of this Danish Hop-o'-my-Thumb.

The fairy-tales of Andersen are rich and intimate with his own fantastic personality. Very few of them are collected from older sources, though the fable of the "Ugly Duckling who Became a Swan" is the Cinderella idea enacted by farmyard inhabitants; "The Flying Trunk" and "The Travelling Companion" hail from the East, like Perrault's "Bluebeard"; Little Klaus is, probably unconsciously, the wily Reynard and Puss-in-Boots once more, using most reprehensible craft in his battle against his dull-witted oppressor, Big Klaus.

It is hard to single out for special mention any of Andersen's stories, for in one volume we find a wonderful diversity of mood and invention. He can be forlorn, grotesque, whimsical, scared, gay, horrible, or ineffably tender. He treats of common things, but never in a common way. In his elfin hands, tin soldiers, goloshes, tinder-boxes, a pair of red shoes, or a night-watchman become as fascinating as all the fabled wonders of Arabia or Cathay.

In Andersen and Ohlenschläger, as in all other Danish writers of the first rank, we find the virtues of lucidity, simplicity, and directness, even in that remarkable philosopher, Sören Kierkegaard (1813-1855), who, in his tragically short life, wrote many books, some of which, trenching upon ecclesiastical and religious matters, involved him in bitter controversies. Always much esteemed in his own country, he was little known in Britain until, in the 1930's, the Oxford University Press began to issue a magnificent commentary edition of his chief philosophical works.

The rise of the philosophy of existentialism, with one phase of which his name is associated, has turned attention anew to this great Northern mystic.

The most interesting personality in modern Danish literature is Georg Brandes, who died in 1927. He wrote brilliantly on the life and work of Shakespeare and on *Main Currents of Nineteenth Century (European) Literature*; and he is perhaps the most distinguished European critic of letters of the half-century, 1880-1930.

To Scandinavia belong the Norwegian Ibsen and the Swedish August Strindberg, two dramatists of world-wide reputation whose work is considered elsewhere. Of Norwegian novelists Bjornson (1832-1910; winner of the Nobel prize in 1903), the contemporary of Ibsen, is best known. In his novel *In God's Way* he discusses with power and insight



the twin problems of heredity and education. He was also a not inconsiderable dramatist; his dramatic work includes both tragedies and comedies: indeed, two volumes of his plays appear in Everyman's Library, which, under the brilliant editorship of Ernest Rhys, himself a poet, essayist, and literary critic, forms the greatest series of books in the whole history of publishing. Bjornson's vogue has since been matched by Knut Hamsun (born in 1850), the author of the widely read and discussed *Hunger*, *Pan*, and *The Growth of the Soil*. He was awarded the Nobel prize in 1920.

## § 16

## SPANISH WRITERS

Less centralised than England, Spain has produced a crop of "regional" novelists, whose inspiration, drawn from local life and custom rather than from European, is nevertheless of great interest. One of the best of these is J. M. de Pereda (1833-1906), who wrote many realistic novels concerning life in Spanish coastal towns. His works, unfortunately, have not been translated into English.

We in England have our representatives of this tendency, of whom the greatest is Thomas Hardy, but whereas here they are the exception they are almost the rule in Spain, since nearly every novelist of distinction from 1870 to 1900 began his career by writing "regionally."

There is also romanticism. Like Charles II it has "been an unconscionable time dying": indeed, it survives, embalmed in the remarkably successful plays of Echegaray (1833-1916), winner of the Nobel prize in 1904; modified in Galdos (1843-1920), playwright and novelist—his best fiction being historical; and half-conscious in many contemporaries who fight, without ever completely conquering, its influence.

Nevertheless, Spanish poetry of the romantic period (c. 1830-1860) was fresh, lyrical, delightful, vernal. Its greatest representative was José de Espronceda (1808-1842), who had a wild and adventurous career, short and peril-sweet: a true romantic in fact as well as in theory. Espronceda is one of the world's greatest lyrists. He matched his pellucid spontaneity and fervour with grace and sheer verbal music; and he was an astoundingly skilful metrist, adapting metre to theme with an unerring and starry rightness. He could hardly be translated. Other notable romantics are Zorrilla and especially Ramon de Campoamor (1817-1901).

But throughout the nineteenth century and until the advent of Spanish Fascism, poetry flourished. Above all, lyric and elegiac poetry. For the period 1830-1930 (and a little after), Spain has a greater lyric poetry than



that possessed by any European country except France and Germany. Linking the romantics with the succeeding period is Becquer (1836-1870). Great names of the post-1860 periods are Rosalia de Castro (1837-1885); J. A. Silva (1865-1896); Ruben Dario (1867-1916) of Nicaragua, a very fine poet. Since Dario's heyday, "In Spain, the outstanding figures . . . have been Unamuno, Antonio Machado, Juan Ramon Jimenez, and Federico Garcia Lorca" (J. B. Trend): their dates are respectively 1864-1937, 1875-1939, 1881, 1899-1936. Unamuno never quite succeeded in his struggle with words; Jimenez, "on the contrary, is the most finished Spanish poet since Gongora" (J. B. Trend); Lorca was "a poet born; a poet . . . by the grace of God" (J. B. Trend); Antonio Machado, like Alfred de Vigny, is a great intellectual lyricist. Indeed, the period 1910-1935 is "one of the great ages of Spanish poetry."

Vicente Blasco Ibañez was at one period the most widely read of modern Spanish writers. He was born in 1867, and was for a time an extreme Radical journalist. For his political writings he was tried by court-martial, imprisoned, and released on parole. He lived for some time in the Argentine, and it was there that he began his serious literary work. Of his many novels only one, *La Maja Destenda*, is a drama of individual psychology. In the others, Ibañez has painted broadly on a large canvas the industrial conditions governing the lives of the Spanish people. One of these novels, *La Horda*, is a sombre picture of the slums of Madrid, its gipsies, its smugglers, and its unemployed workmen. *The Cathedral*, set in the mediæval city of Toledo, has for its theme the struggle between Bolshevism and Clericalism, and *Arroz y Tartana* is a Spanish study of "clogs to clogs."

The war novels *Mare Nostrum* and *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* have been widely read and translated. They both have the qualities of exuberance, brilliant colour, and fine dramatic effect. These are also the qualities of *Blood and Sand*, a brilliant study of the life of a Spanish bull-fighter. Ibañez makes no attempt to minimise the disgusting horrors of the bull-ring. The death of Gallardo, the matador, is an example of the novelist's power of description:

He placed himself opposite the animal, who seemed waiting for him, steady on its legs. He thought it useless to make any more passes with the muleta. So he placed himself "in profile" with the red cloth hanging on the ground, and the rapier horizontal at the height of his eye. Now to thrust in his arm!

With a sudden impulse the audience rose to their feet; for a few seconds the man and the bull formed one single mass, and so moved on some steps. The connoisseurs were already waving their hands anxious to applaud. He had thrown himself in to kill as in his best day. That was a "true" *estocade*!



But suddenly the man was thrown out from between the horns by a crushing blow, and rolled on the sand. The bull lowered his head, picking up the inert body, lifting it for an instant on his horns to let it fall again, then rushing on his mad career with the rapier plunged up to the hilt in his neck.

Gallardo rose slowly ; the whole Plaza burst out into uproarious, deafening applause, anxious to repair their injustice. *Olé* for the man ! Well done the lad from Seville ! He had been splendid !

But the torero did not acknowledge these outbursts of enthusiasm. He raised his hand to his stomach, crouching in a painful curve, and with his head bent began to walk forward with uncertain step. Twice he raised his head as if he were looking for the door of exit and fearing not to be able to find it, finally staggering like a drunken man, and falling flat on the sand. . . .

The matador was carried into the infirmary to die. Blasco Ibañez himself died in 1928.

### READING LIST

American prose literature of this period is neatly summarised in Trent & Erskine's *Great Writers of America* (Home University Library) ; see, too, *The Oxford Book of American Prose*, edited by M. Van Doren.

HENRY JAMES : *A History of American Literature*, edited by W. P. Trent, vol. iii. (Cambridge University Press).

Messrs. Macmillan publish the works of Henry James in various editions ; and Longmans the works of William James.

With the tremendous post-war boom in James various editions have been published recently, including *The Ambassador*, in Everyman.

*The Note Books*, recently published by the O.U.P., give the most remarkable insights into a writer's mind and methods.

W. D. HOWELLS : Messrs. Harper publish many of his works.

O. HENRY : Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton publish a large number of his works, including *Waifs and Strays*, which contains a biographical sketch of the author.

THEODORE DREISER : his novels are published by Constable (the publishers of so much of the best American fiction).

MADAME MARY DUCLAUX : *Twentieth Century French Writers* (Collins).

EDMOND ROSTAND : *Cyrano de Bergerac* in English (Heinemann).

ANATOLE FRANCE : John Lane publishes translations of many of his works.

PIERRE LOTI : Messrs. Werner Laurie publish translations of several of Loti's works.

*The Romance of a Spahi* (Collins).

ROMAIN ROLLAND : *John Christopher* (*Jean Christophe*), translated by Gilbert Cannan, 4 vols. (Heinemann).

MAURICE MAETERLINCK : Messrs. Methuen publish translations of many of Maeterlinck's works.

Messrs. G. Allen & Unwin publish translations of *The Life of the Bee*, *Monna Vanna*, *Life and Flowers*, etc.

Gilbert Waterhouse, *German Literature* (Methuen); *German Short Stories* (World's Classics).

HEINRICH HEINE : *Prose and Poetry* (Dent).

C. F. HEBBEL : *Plays* (Everyman's Library).

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE : *The Complete Works*, edited by Dr. Oscar Levy, are published by Foulis; *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (Dent).

*The Will to Power*, 2 vols. (Allen & Unwin).

*Nietzsche*, by Crane Brinton (Oxford University Press).

PRINCE KROPOTKIN : *Russian Literature : Ideals and Realities* (Duckworth).

Maurice Baring, *Russian Literature* (Home University Library).

*Russian Short Stories* (World's Classics).

N. V. GOGOL : *Dead Souls and Taras Bulba and other Tales*, in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

A. PUSHKIN : *The Captain's Daughter* (etc.), in Everyman's Library.

I. GONCHAROV : *Oblomov* is in Everyman's Library.

TURGENEV : *The Works of Ivan Turgenev*, translated by Constance Garnett, in 15 vols. (Heinemann).

F. M. DOSTOEVSKY : *The Novels of Dostoevsky*, translated by Constance Garnett, 12 vols. (Heinemann).

*Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, and other volumes are obtainable in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

N. E. SHCHEDRIN : *The Golovlyov Family* is in Everyman's Library.

TOLSTOY : *Anna Karenina*, 2 vols., in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

*Plays*, in the World's Classics.

*Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*, translated by Constance Garnett (Heinemann).

Of his short and middle-length stories there are four volumes in the World's Classics.

Aylmer Maude's *Leo Tolstoy* (Oxford).

*Leo Tolstoy*, by Ernest J. Simmons is a recent and scholarly study (John Lehmann).

A. P. CHEKHOV : Messrs. Chatto & Windus publish several volumes of Chekhov's stories, translated by Constance Garnett, also 2 vols. of *Plays*.

*Plays and Stories* (Everyman's Library).

GORKI, is published by Cape, Cassell, Dent, and Duckworth.



MEREJKOWSKI, by Constable.

See also *Treasury of Russian Literature*, edited by Bernard Guilbert (Bodley Head).

ADAM MICKIEWICZ and HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ : Both are published in Everyman's Library (Dent).

CARDUCCI : Some of his verse has been translated by G. L. Bickersteth. (Longmans).

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO : Messrs. Heinemann publish translations of several of d'Annunzio's plays and novels.

GIOVANNI PAPINI : Papini's *Life of Christ* (Hodder & Stoughton).

HANS ANDERSEN : *Fairy Tales and More Fairy Tales*, Everyman's Library (Dent).

SÖREN KIERKEGAARD : *Journals*. Selected and translated by Alexander Dru (Oxford University Press) ; also *Kierkegaard Anthology*, edited by Robert Bretall.

BLASCO IBAÑEZ : English translations of some of his novels were published by Thornton Butterworth.

The Spanish poets of the twentieth century : see J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *Spanish Literature* (Heinemann) ; introduction and notes in *The Oxford Book of Spanish Verse*.

KNUT HAMSON : *The Growth of the Soil* (Lane) ; *Hunger* (Duckworth) ; *Vagabonds* (Cassell) ; *Mysteries and Women at the Pump* (Allen & Unwin).

For the European literatures, see also the verse anthologies published by the Oxford University Press : *The Oxford Book of French Verse* ; *The Oxford Book of German Verse* ; *The Oxford Book of Scandinavian Verse* ; *The Oxford Book of Italian Verse* ; *The Oxford Book of Spanish Verse* ; *The Oxford Book of Russian Verse*.

## XXXVI

## SOME LATER VICTORIANS

## § 1

GEORGE MEREDITH, the subtlest of English—perhaps of all—novelists, was born in the High Street, Portsmouth, on February 12, 1828. His father, who was of Welsh descent, was a tailor. Although in politics Meredith was an extreme Radical, as a literary artist he was concerned with the gentle and the well-bred, and there is no question that he was ashamed of his tailor father, who was the original of “the Great Mell” in his *Evan Harrington*, much in the same way as Dickens’s father was the original of Micawber. Meredith’s mother was an Irish lady who died when he was five. He was educated at the Moravian school at Neuwied on the Rhine, where he remained until he was nearly sixteen. After his return to England he studied in a desultory way for the law, and when he was twenty-one he married one of the daughters of Thomas Love Peacock, the novelist.

Little is known of the life of George Meredith in the five years that followed. His first published poem appeared in *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal* in the year of his marriage, and his first book, *Poems* (including *Love in the Valley*), was published in 1851. He apparently wrote very little and could hardly have supported himself and his family with his pen. In 1856 he published *The Shaving of Shagpat*, and in the same year he began to write regularly for the *Ipswich Journal* and the *Morning Post*. George Eliot reviewed *The Shaving of Shagpat* and described it as “a work of genius precious as an apple-tree among the trees of the world.” The author himself described the book as *An Arabian Entertainment*.

*Farina*, aptly described as “a full-blooded specimen of the nonsense of genius,” a contrast between asceticism and the realisation of the joy of life, was published in 1857, to be followed two years later by the great novel, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*. This story of a father and a son, a father who himself the slave of “a system” contrived misery for his son by his blind devotion to theory, is a poignant ironic tragedy, dignified with many passages of extraordinary beauty. Meredith had an acute appreciation of the connection between human thrills and sorrows and the world that supplies the scene for the human drama.

Robert Louis Stevenson said that the parting scene between Richard and Lucy was the strongest written since Shakespeare. Richard was



leaving his wife and baby to fight a duel, and she was begging him to remain :

He was almost vanquished by the loveliness of her womanhood. She drew his hand to her heart, and strained it there under one breast. "Come : lie on my heart," she murmured with a smile of holy sweetness.

He wavered more, and drooped to her, but summoning the powers of hell, kissed her suddenly, cried the words of parting, and hurried to the door. It was over in an instant. She cried out his name, clinging to him wildly, and was adjured to be brave, for he would be dishonoured if he did not go. Then she was shaken off.

The story ends in tragedy. Lucy dies and Richard is heart-broken. "Have you noticed the expression in the eyes of blind men? That is just how Richard looks, as he lies there silent in his bed—striving to image her on his brain."

*Evan Harrington* was published serially in 1860. In a sense it is autobiographical, the story of a tailor's son, brought up as a gentleman, bound to a business he hates, by his father's debts. The tailor, "the Great Mell," is dead when the story begins, but his personality dominates the whole book. "He was a tailor and he kept horses ; he was a tailor and he had gallant adventures ; he was a tailor and he shook hands with his customers. Finally, he was a tradesman and he was never known to have sent in a bill."

Meredith's second book of poems, *Modern Love*, was published in 1862. It was severely criticised in the *Spectator*, and the criticism brought a remarkable letter of protest from Swinburne, in which he said : "Mr. Meredith is one of the three or four poets now alive whose work, perfect or imperfect, is always as noble in design as it is often faultless in result." It is, by most competent critics, held to be his best volume of poems.

The first Mrs. Meredith died in 1860. The marriage was not a success, but his second marriage with a lady of French descent brought him twenty years of unclouded happiness. Soon after his second marriage he went to live at Flint Cottage, Box Hill, which remained his home until his death.

*Sandra Belloni* was published in 1864. It is little more than the introduction to *Vittoria*, the second novel with an Italian scene which appeared three years later, but it contains many examples of Meredithian wisdom such as the description of true passion as "noble strength on fire." In 1866 Meredith acted as special correspondent of the *Morning Post* with the Italian army during the war between Prussia and Austria, in which the Italians finally recovered Venice from the Hapsburgs. This experience gave him a close acquaintance with the Italian scenes described in *Vittoria*, a story of the revolution of 1848, in which incidentally the novelist painted a famous word-picture of Mazzini.



In *Vittoria* Meredith insists on the necessity of discipline. The soul must not be allowed to "fly out among the twisting chances":

Our life is but a little holding, lent  
To do a mighty labour: we are one  
With heaven and the stars when it is spent  
To serve God's aim: else die we with the sun.

Space forbids the detailed analysis of all Meredith's novels, and it must suffice to record that *Rhoda Fleming*, a story written in a lucid, simple style and concerned for the most part with persons in humble life, was published in 1865; *Harry Richmond*, with its hero the perfect tragic comedian in 1870, and *Beauchamp's Career*, the hero of which was suggested by the novelist's friend, Admiral Maxse, in 1874. *The Egoist* was published in 1879. Writing of this supremely great novel, Robert Louis Stevenson said:

Here is a Nathan for the modern David; here is a book to send the blood into men's faces. Satire, the angry picture of human faults, is not great art; we can all be angry with our neighbour; what we want is to be shown, not his defects, of which we are too conscious, but his merits, to which we are too blind. And *The Egoist* is a satire; so much must be allowed; but it is a satire of a singular quality, which tells you nothing of that obvious mote, which is engaged from first to last with that invisible beam. It is yourself that is hunted down; these are your own faults that are dragged into the day and numbered, with lingering relish, with cruel cunning and precision. A young friend of Mr. Meredith's (as I have the story) came to him in an agony. "This is too bad of you," he cried. "Willoughby is me!" "No, my dear fellow," said the author; "he is all of us." I have read *The Egoist* five or six times myself, and I mean to read it again; for I am like the young friend of the anecdote—I think Willoughby an unmanly but a very serviceable exposure of myself.

Shortly before he wrote *The Egoist*, Meredith's *Essay on Comedy* was published in *The New Quarterly Magazine*. In it he acutely analyses satire, irony, and humour, and suggests that if the comic idea prevailed the world would be cleansed of much of its sin and most of its boredom. It was with the comic idea in his mind that Meredith wrote *The Egoist*. Egoism was to him almost the unforgivable sin, and Sir Willoughby Patterne is the perfect egoist. As she glances at him the Comic Muse perforce "compresses her lips."

In *The Tragic Comedians*, published in 1880, Meredith tells the love-story of Ferdinand Lassalle, the German aristocratic Socialist, and Helene von Donniges. Another book of poems, *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth*, was published in 1883. In 1884 the serial publication of *Diana of the Crossways* began in the *Fortnightly Review*. The story is founded on the history of Caroline Norton, one of Sheridan's beautiful granddaughters,



whose husband brought an unsuccessful divorce action against her on a charge of misconduct with Lord Melbourne, the Victorian Prime Minister, and who was falsely accused of having betrayed to *The Times* the fact that Robert Peel intended to repeal the Corn Laws. *Diana of the Crossways* remains Meredith's most popular novel, mainly on account of the charm of its heroine. "Like Rosalind," wrote W. E. Henley, "she is pure woman; and like Rosalind (and her sisters) she has in her enough of her spiritual sire to proclaim her birthright and affirm the illustrious kinship." It is the finest of all novels on the theme of female emancipation.

*One of Our Conquerors* was published in 1890 and *Lord Ormont and his Aminta* in 1894. The last of the Meredith novels, *The Amazing Marriage*, was published serially in 1895. In 1905 Meredith was appointed by King Edward to the Order of Merit. He died of heart failure on May 18, 1909, at the age of eighty-one.

Meredith outlived the Victorian era and he had no spiritual affinity with it, and it is often forgotten that he was the contemporary of the great Victorian novelists. His first book of poems was published in the same year as *David Copperfield* and *Pendennis*. *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* appeared in the same year as *The Tale of Two Cities*, *Adam Bede*, and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. For many years he was little read and his genius was rarely appreciated, and this neglect was unquestionably largely due to the "difficulty" of his style. Henley called him "one of the worst and least attractive of great writers as well as one of the best and most fascinating." Andrew Lang confessed that he erred "in a wilful obscurity, in a too eager search for points and epigrams, in the leaps and bounds of too agile a wit." Again to quote Henley: "He bristles with allusions, he teems with hints and side hits and false alarms, he glitters with phrases, he riots in intellectual points and philosophical fancies." But though it may still require courage and persistence to read Meredith, the result is æsthetic and intellectual pleasure and moral and spiritual inspiration. Mrs. Carlyle read *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* aloud to her husband, and at the end Carlyle remarked, "This man's no fule." This is a common experience—no fool indeed, but an inspired guide.

As a poet Meredith is perhaps most appealing when he sings of Nature; as Richard le Gallienne has said, his Nature songs are exquisite, "because he has loved and worshipped her as a man his wife." What loveliness there is in such lines as these taken from *The Lark Ascending*!—

He rises and begins to round,  
He drops the silver chain of sound  
Of many links without a break  
In chirrup, whistle, slur, and shake,

All interwolved and spreading wide,  
 Like water-dimples down a tide  
 Where ripple ripple overcurls  
 And eddy into eddy whirls.

But he also wrote several magnificent odes—and the greatest, most exquisite *long* love-poem in the English language: *Love in the Valley*, ardent yet delicate, beautiful yet extremely intelligent.

Meredith may yet outlive Hardy.

## § 2

Thomas Hardy is one of the greatest of modern novelists. Although he died in the winter of 1928, it is not possible to estimate yet what his niche in the temple of literature may be ultimately. In predicting immortality, or a measure of it, for a writer of our own period, we gain something for ourselves. "We share the triumph, and partake the gale." It is certain that many readers and students of Thomas Hardy's novels and poems are prepared to take the risk of their homage. As a novelist and a poet he has brought men something new, original, and strangely old. He has advanced the domain of the novel from the seen joys and sorrows in the world, as we know them, to something deeper: to the ultimate experiences of human life under the stars. It is a strange, but not an inexplicable thing, that Hardy should be the novelist of Wessex and our own first novelist of the universe.

There is a passage in his great story, *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), which we venture to say is entirely peculiar to Hardy and could have appeared in no novel by an earlier writer. Gabriel Oak, a typically fine Dorset shepherd and stoic, born of the soil, with ancient morals and ideals running through his blood, is abroad late at night to tend his flock. The whole story is to be concerned with Wessex farming, farm luck and catastrophes, local events and individual passions, but, above all—with human nature, and with Hardy's reading of it through a Dorset focus. And thus, when Farmer Oak goes out to his lone shepherd's hut with his flute and his hopes, Hardy arrests his story with a magnificent expansion of the actual scene. He arches it with all that arches man.

The sky was clear—remarkably clear—and the twinkling of all the stars seemed to be but throbs of one body, timed by a common pulse. The North Star was directly in the wind's eye, and since evening the Bear had swung round it outwardly to the east, till he was now at a right angle with the meridian. A difference of colour in the stars—oftener read of than seen in England—was really perceptible here. The kingly brilliancy of Sirius pierced the eye with a steely



glitter, the star called Capella was yellow, Aldebaran and Betelgeux shone with a fiery red.

To persons standing alone on a hill during a clear midnight such as this, the roll of the world eastward is almost a palpable movement. The sensation may be caused by the panoramic glide of the stars past earthly objects, which is perceptible in a few minutes of stillness, or by the better outlook upon spaces that a hill affords, or by the wind, or by the solitude ; but whatever be its origin, the impression of riding along is vivid and abiding. The poetry of motion is a phrase much in use, and to enjoy the epic form of that gratification it is necessary to stand on a hill at a small hour of the night, and, having first expanded with a sense of difference from the mass of civilised mankind, who are dream-wrapt and disregardful of all such proceedings at this time, long and quietly watch your stately progress through the stars. After such a nocturnal reconnoitre it is hard to get back to earth, and to believe that the consciousness of such majestic speeding is derived from a tiny human frame.

This is the note which Hardy has brought into the English novel, and by which he may hereafter be judged the greatest of English novelists. He is the only novelist who has made a tract of English country a "chorus" to a story. This is his triumph in his greatest novel, *The Return of the Native* (1878), but it is also his tendency in all his novels. We refer, of course, to the marvellous and haunting presence of Egdon Heath. The first sentences of *The Return of the Native* form probably the finest opening of an English novel :

A Saturday afternoon in November was approaching the time of twilight, and the vast tract of enclosed wild known as Egdon Heath embrowned itself moment by moment. Overhead the hollow stretch of whitish cloud shutting out the sky was as a tent which had the whole heath for its floor.

What could be more portentous of human drama played out on this old rolling planet? Fielding, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, never struck an organ note quite like this. And this opening is not merely an opening ; rather it resembles a musical motive, once heard, often repeated, and therefore never forgotten. In the world of men and things it has its counterpart in the finest ending to an English novel which, one may venture to say, has been written—though by the same hand :

A few minutes after the hour had struck something moved slowly up the staff, and extended itself upon the breeze. It was a black flag.

Justice was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Æschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess.

Thomas Hardy was born on June 2, 1840, at Upper Bockhampton, a woodland and secluded hamlet about a mile from the Dorchester which he describes with a unique blend of precision and imagination in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. His father was a builder, and he was himself designed



and indeed went far to be an architect. At the age of seventeen he was articled to a Dorchester architect, Mr. Hicks. Three years later, he came to London and became a pupil of Sir Arthur Blomfield. In 1863 he won the medal of the Institute of British Architects for an essay on "Coloured Brick and Terra-cotta Architecture," and a prize offered by Sir William Tite for architectural design. But in the evolution of circumstances and of his own spirit he quitted architecture for the greater risks of literature. Hardy's novels and his poems are alike founded on old Wessex, which includes Wiltshire, Hampshire, Somersetshire, and Oxfordshire. It may seem, on a first thought, that a great novelist must needs take the world for his province and not one area of one country. But the novelist's sphere is not the geographical world, it is human nature. The universe, says Emerson, globes itself in one drop of dew, and it is certain that human nature, which in all its important dimensions is the same everywhere, can be studied within narrow limits. A few villages were enough for Jane Austen; the Lake Country circumscribed without imprisoning Wordsworth; the Yorkshire moorlands enclosed but could not enchain the Brontës; Burns was no traveller. Thomas Hardy has seen the kingdoms of the world, and their glory and futility, from Egdon Heath.

## § 3

Hardy's first novel was entitled *The Poor Man and the Lady*; it never reached print. He launched himself as an author when *Desperate Remedies* appeared in 1871. It attracted more notice from critics than from the public. Next year appeared the most idyllic of all his novels, *Under the Greenwood Tree*. This is the novel which may be recommended as the first to be read. Next year appeared *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, which, though not in the first flight of Hardy's novels, is an enthralling drama of three lives set in the time when indiscriminate church-restoration was going on all over England. The scene is almost entirely confined to Castle Boterel (Boscastle). The story ends with one of the most curiously conceived tragic incidents in modern fiction—the kind of *dénouement* which only Hardy could have conceived. The next novel, already referred to and quoted, was *Far From the Madding Crowd*. In it Hardy rose to the power which found full expression in the five novels, *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Woodlanders*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). It was to the severity of certain criticisms passed on the last-named novel that we owe our loss of Hardy the novelist.

*The Return of the Native* probably excels every other English novel in its use of background. Egdon Heath is, indeed, more than a background; it broods like a spirit over the whole story, and its wilds become



organic to the unfolding drama. Of the many descriptions of this great wilderness of hill and furze the following is typical :

The untameable Ishmaelitish study that Egdon now was it had always been. Civilization was its enemy ; and ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same antique brown dress, the natural and invariable garment of the particular formation. In its venerable one coat lay a certain vein of satire on human vanity in clothes. A person on a heath in raiment of modern cut and colours has more or less an anomalous look. We seem to want the oldest and simplest human clothing where the clothing of the earth is so primitive.

To recline on a stump of thorn in the central valley of Egdon, between afternoon and night, as now, where the eye could reach nothing of the world outside the summits and shoulders of heathland which filled the whole circumference of it, and to know that everything around and underneath had been from prehistoric times as unaltered as the stars overhead, gave ballast to the mind adrift on change, and harassed by the irrepressible New.

Hardy gives to scenery a self-existence and a spiritual life which is rare indeed. This power of the most intimate, because habitual vision, is found in his grasp of the peasant life of Wessex. He knows its characters from within. To quote Lionel Johnson :

That poor creature, the "up-country London ink-bottle feller," can do his best to describe rustics : he will hardly, without infinite pains, attain to the interpretation of them. But Mr. Hardy has all the powers required for both description and interpretation of his own countrymen : in his books, the rustic folk are perfectly alike. He knows what lies behind the silence of the shrewd, the sullenness of the stupid ; the blessings or the blows of fortune, which have moulded character ; the countless details of work, which have marked the workman's mind and hand ; and all the contents of his Wessex country. The views of life, of society, of religion, views multifarious and odd, entertained there, are familiar to him : but his knowledge is not a source of power alone ; it is a source of beauty too.

A good example of the rustic talk which Hardy so finely captures is the dialogue, in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, between Joseph Poorgrass and Coggan and Mark Clark at the Buck's Head, where Poorgrass had stopped to refresh himself, leaving the coffin which contained the body of the unhappy victim of Sergeant Troy, Fanny Robin, in his cart and in the rain :

"I believe you be a Chapel member, Joseph. That I do."

"Oh no ! no ! I don't go as far as that."

"For my part," said Coggan, "I'm a staunch Church of England."

"Ay, and faith so be I," said Mark Clark.

"I won't say much for myself ; I don't wish to," Coggan continued, with that tendency to talk on principles which is characteristic of the barley-corn.

"But I've never changed a single doctrine : I've stuck like a plaster to the old

faith I was born in. Yes : there's this to be said for the Church, a man can belong to his Church and live in his cheerful old inn, and never trouble or worry his mind about doctrines at all. But to be a meetinger, you must go to chapel in all winds and weathers, and make yerself as frantic as a skit. Not that but Chapel members be clever chaps enough in their way. They can lift up beautiful prayers out of their own heads, all about their families and shipwrecks in the newspaper."

"They can—they can," said Mark Clark, with corroborative feeling ; "but we Churchmen, you see, must have it all printed aforehand, or, dang it all, we should no more know what to say to a great person like the Lord than babes unborn."

"Chapel folk be more hand-in-glove with them above than we," said Joseph thoughtfully.

"Yes," said Coggan. "We know very well that if any one goes to heaven they will. . . . But I hate a fellow who'll change his old ancient doctrines for the sake of getting to heaven. I'd as soon turn King's evidence for the few pounds you get."

All these characteristics of Hardy will be found in other novels : in *The Trumpet Major* (a study of the impact of the Napoleon invasion terror on Wessex life), *A Laodicean*, *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876), *Wessex Tales* (1888), and *Life's Little Ironies* (1894). And equally will Hardy's style be found to be the same in all his novels. It is an ordered, deliberate, unhurrying style which reaches its effect as by tessellation. It can empurple itself, but it never runs to the purple patch, as, also, it never, or seldom, throws up epigram. His style seems to be native to the dignity of his subject and to the drama of life in an ancient and slow-moving world.

Hardy's longest and greatest work is *The Dynasts*, which appeared in three parts in 1904, 1906, and 1908. The whole of this chapter would not furnish space to explain and illustrate the unfolding of this great sombre drama, at once realistic and allegorical, of Wessex in the Napoleonic period. With the Wessex peasants mingle other-world beings, incarnations of the Immanent Will, the Spirit of the Years, the Phantom Intelligences, and the Spirit of the Pities. The new-born superstitions of the countryside mingle with the old.

*The Dynasts* is a gigantic conception of one of the greatest ages in our history : it introduces kings and statesmen ; its stage is Europe ; its atmosphere is war ; the whole drama is shaken by battle and volcano-bursts of history.

#### § 4

Thomas Hardy was a poet before he was a novelist, and after ceasing to be a novelist (his last novel, *Jude the Obscure*, was published thirty years before he died) he remained a great and prolific poet, with a place in English



poetry as much his own as was his place in English fiction. Hardy never conformed. On the other hand, he was never insensitive to criticism. He abandoned fiction when *Jude the Obscure* was misunderstood and cheaply ridiculed.

And then he returned to poetry—his first love—but returned to it a thoughtful and brooding man, to whom it was now a cup to be filled by his experience of life. His poem *In the Seventies* is a beautiful recalling of his first secret inspirations :

In the seventies I was bearing in my breast,  
                     Penned tight,  
 Certain starry thoughts that threw a magic light  
 On the worktimes and the soundless hours of rest  
 In the seventies ; aye, I bore them in my breast  
                     Penned tight.

In the seventies nought could darken or destroy it,  
                     Locked in me,  
 Though as delicate as lamp-worm's lucency ;  
 Neither mist nor murk could weaken or alloy it  
 In the seventies !—could not darken or destroy it,  
                     Locked in me.

The reader can best make his first acquaintance with Hardy's poetry by taking up the smaller collection, *Late Lyrics and Earlier*, published in 1922. In very many of these poems we find Hardy's inveterate tendency to look back, to regret lost opportunity, or to marvel at the outcome or the no-outcome of first meetings and the emotion of remembering ships that passed in the night. It is thus in *The West-of-Wessex Girl*, who was "blithe as blithe could be," and had been his for the asking :

But never I squired my Wessex girl  
           In jaunts to Hoe or street  
           When hearts were high in beat,  
 Nor saw her in the marbled ways  
           Where market-people meet,  
 That in her bounding early days  
           Were friendly with her feet.

And again in the little story-poem, *Faint Heart in a Railway Train*, which is so short that we venture to quote it all :

At nine in the morning there passed a church,  
 At ten there passed me by the sea,  
 At twelve a town of smoke and smirch,  
 At two a forest of oak and birch,  
           And then, on a platform, she :

A radiant stranger, who saw not me,  
 I queried, "Get out to her do I dare?"  
 But I kept my seat in search for a plea,  
 And the wheels moved on. O, could it be  
 That I had alighted there!

Such laments have nothing to do with a personal "pessimism," for they are of the texture of life and have their counterpart in the experience of every man and woman of us.

But the past and the passage of long years are not always made a theme of sadness. In *One who Lived and Died where he was Born* we have another note. The infant was carried downstairs for the first time; eighty years later he went up the same stairs for the last time. The picture is one to quieten the spirit in an age like ours:

On those nights in November—  
 Apart eighty years—  
 The babe and the bent one  
 Who traversed those stairs  
 From the early first time  
 To the last feeble climb—  
 That fresh and that spent one  
 Were even the same;  
 Yea, who passed in November  
 As infant and bent one,  
 Those stairs.

In many of Hardy's poems there is a certain element of wantonness in attaining poignant and remorseless effects which sometimes gives the reader pause in Hardy's novels, as in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, where the whole destiny of a poor girl is turned from bright promise to certain doom through her mistaking a church for the one to which she was walking to be safely married. We have this kind of effect in the almost grotesquely remorseless little narrative poem, *The Whipper-in*. A youth who had quarrelled with his father and run away to sea, now returns, penitent, to his home with the intention to help the old man. Catching sight of a red coat, he imagines he sees his father going to the kennel-shed. To an old friend whom he has met he stops to parley and to realise the situation:

"I curs'd and fought my father—aye,  
 And sailed to a foreign land;  
 And feeling sorry, I'm back, to stay,  
 Please God, as his helping hand.  
 Surely it is my father  
 Near where the kennels stand."



" True, Whipper-in he used to be  
 For twenty years or more ;  
 And you did go away to sea,  
 As youths have done before.  
 Yes, oddly enough, that red there  
 Is the very coat he wore.

" But he—he's dead ; was thrown, somehow,  
 And gave his back a crick ;  
 And though that is his coat, 'tis now  
 The scarecrow of a rick ;  
 You'll see when you get nearer—  
 'Tis spread out on a stick.

" You see, when all had settled down  
 Your mother's things were sold,  
 And she went back to her own town,  
 And the coat, ate out with mould,  
 Is now used by the farmer  
 For scaring, as 'tis old."

It is perhaps a fair suggestion that here the pathos is too ingeniously constructive, a criticism which, if it be just, does not apply to the *dénouement* of *The Two Wives*, a version of a *Smoker's Club Story*. Two husbands sit together while their wives are out boating. There comes the rumour of an accident :

Tidings came that the boat was capsized  
 and that one of the ladies  
 Was drowned—which of them  
 was unknown :  
 And I marvelled—my friend's wife ?—  
 or was it my own  
 Who had gone in such wise to the land  
 where the sun as the shade is ?  
 —We learnt that it was *his* had so gone.

Then I cried in unrest : " He is free !  
 But no good is releasing  
 To him as it would be to me ! "  
 —" But it is," said the woman I loved,  
 quietly.  
 " How ? " I asked her.—" Because he  
 has long loved me too without  
 ceasing,  
 And it's just the same thing, don't you see."

These short and gripping narrative poems of taut experience and unuttered counsel are such as only Hardy could have conceived. We would name *A Woman's Fancy*, *The Contretemps*, *The Wife Comes Back*, *Side by Side*, *At the Dinner-table*, *Outside the Casement*, and *In a London Flat*.

Much has been said about Hardy's "pessimism." But the name "pessimist" is as untrue to human instinct and experience as the word "atheist." No sane man can, or does, deny the existence of God. He may doubt His existence, or be bewildered by His ways to man, but a denial of His Being is not possible to one who retains a sense of the limitations of the human mind. And the man who can be pronounced a pessimist is similarly outside the pale of human experience: he has become useless to his fellow-men. Hardy has kept and shown, in every word he has written, his faith in human nature. He may think that we are all creatures of circumstance, not successful suppliants to a personal Ruler of the Universe. But all his words are evidence of his belief that, however doubtfully man is guided through the stormy ravine of life, he has within himself powers of doing and enduring which he can cultivate in the individual and in the race. To "think nobly of the soul" is all.

An interesting contrast is provided by Samuel Butler, often called "Erewhon Butler," to distinguish him from the seventeenth-century poetical satirist. "Erewhon" Butler (1825-1902) was also a satirist, but in prose: he was more subtle than his namesake. His chief satirical works are *Erewhon* (nowhere reversed) and *Erewhon Revisited*, 1871 and 1901 respectively; he wrote wittily and dryly on men, art, science (as in *Life and Habit*), and on Homer and Shakespeare; but he is mostly remembered for his novel, *The Way of All Flesh* (1903). Somewhat overrated up to about 1930, his reputation has now found its level.

## § 5

Robert Louis Stevenson was born at Edinburgh, November 1850, his father and his grandfather being well-known lighthouse-builders. At school he drew slight profit from his books, but a good deal from "Crusoeing," as he called it—"a word that covers all extempore eating in the open air; digging, perhaps, a house under the margin of the links, kindling a fire of sea-gear, and cooking apples there." This gipsy-spirit in his blood was to abide with him through life. From a boy he was a writer also; and as he grew in years he became, as he has told us,

The sedulous ape to Hazlitt, to Lamb, to Wordsworth, to Sir Thomas Browne, to Defoe, to Hawthorne, to Montaigne, to Baudelaire, and to Obermann. *Cain*, an epic, was (save the mark!) an imitation of *Sordello*: *Robin Hood*, a tale in



verse, took an eclectic middle course among the fields of Keats, Chaucer, and Morris : in *Monmouth*, a tragedy, I reposed on the bosom of Mr. Swinburne : in my innumerable gouty-footed lyrics I followed many masters. . . . This, like it or not, is the way to learn to write.

That is one way, no doubt, but it is not the only way. Writers such as Hazlitt, Lamb, and Wordsworth spin from their own vitals their own web of style. But perhaps it was the only way for him. At any rate, he did evolve a style, which, although the art of it, especially in dialogue, is often but imperfectly concealed, is lucid, strong, and sharply graphic—a style, though lacking in the deeper music, seldom without its own peculiar charm. He had also all the gifts of a great story-teller ; and a story-teller, like a poet, is born and not made.

These experiments went on for several years. Meanwhile, he studied engineering, but made nothing of it. Then he read for the Bar, with more success, passed as advocate, clapped a brass plate on his door-post, and awaited briefs. Three or four came in. But “ old father Antic the Law ” turned out a bore of the first water. And so, without further parleyings with Fate, he set up, at twenty-five, as a writer by profession.

What Stevenson was like, in mind and body, at that date is as familiar, even to us who never saw him, as one of our own friends. One of the best word-portraits left of him is that of Henley’s sonnet :

Thin-legged, thin-chested, slight unspeakably,  
Neat-footed and weak-fingered : in his face—  
Lean, large-boned, curved of beak, and touched with race,  
Bold-lipped, rich-tinted, mutable as the sea,  
The brown eyes radiant with vivacity—  
There shines a brilliant and romantic grace,  
A spirit intense and rare, with trace on trace  
Of passion, impudence, and energy.  
Valiant in velvet, light in ragged luck,  
Most vain, most generous, sternly critical,  
Buffoon and poet, lover and sensualist :  
A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck,  
Much Antony, of Hamlet most of all,  
And something of the Shorter-Catechist.

This paints the man in all his aspects, strong and weak alike. Even “ most vain ” is justified. In his dress, as in his style, there was always something artificial—something of the poser. One day, in Bond Street, Andrew Lang declined to be seen talking to him—and no wonder ; he was arrayed in a black shirt, a red tie, a black brigand cloak, and a velvet smoking-cap. On another occasion he was seen in a lady’s fur cape clasped by a large brooch, into which was stuck a bunch of daffodils. One description of himself, by an American reporter, he used to quote with an amused

resentment : " a tall, willowy figure, surmounted by a classic head, from which issued a hacking cough."

That cough, alas ! was characteristic—a sign of the lung trouble which was ever with him, and which was to kill him in the end. He travelled far and wide in search of health. It was at Barbizon that he met with Mrs. Osborne, who afterwards became his wife. A canoe-journey from Antwerp to Pontoise in 1876 was recorded in his first book, *An Inland Voyage*, while in 1879 appeared the *Travels with a Donkey through the Cevennes*—two delightful books, not only for their vivid travel-pictures but for their Hamlet-moralisings upon men and things. Yet neither of them made anything which could be called a hit. But in 1881 *Treasure Island* was accepted by *Young Folks*, and on its publication, in the following year, as a book was hailed as the best thing of its kind since *Robinson Crusoe*. As a romance for boys it is ideal, with its scenery of sea and island, its pirates and its hidden treasure, while children of a larger growth can take delight in the drawing of the desperadoes, Pew, Long John Silver, and Black Dog, who are in no way characters of melodrama, but deadly living men. *Kidnapped* (1886) and its sequel *Catriona* (1893), with their scenes of daring deeds, miraculous escapes, and mortal combats, laid among the savage crags and forests of the Grampian Mountains, belong to the same class of pure romance.

One morning Stevenson awoke from a strange dream. The scenes and characters were still vividly before him. A story was all ready to his hand, and he wrote it at white heat. It was *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). The book was the best-seller of the day. The allegory of the good and evil selves in man appealed to people to whom novels were taboo. A sermon was preached upon it in St. Paul's. It went to the four corners of the earth, and it made his fortune and his fame secure.

In 1889 appeared *The Master of Ballantrae*, perhaps his finest work. The story, told by Mackellar, the steward of an old and noble family, is chiefly that of the two brothers of the house, the elder, the Master, charming but cruel-hearted, and the younger, Henry, simple, plain, and frank. The brothers come to fight a duel. The description of it is a masterpiece of graphic and dramatic writing, and a specimen of Stevenson's surpassing gift of story-telling.

Some of Stevenson's best work is in his shorter stories. Among the finest are those included in the gay and entertaining *New Arabian Nights*—*The Suicide Club* and *The Rajah's Diamond* ; that distilled quintessence of romance, *The Pavilion on the Links* ; that most fascinating of problem-stories, *Markheim* ; and *A Lodging for the Night*, with its study of that strange ill-omened bird of darkness, Villon, rogue and poet, scholar and assassin.



The articles and essays which had appeared from time to time in periodicals were gathered into the three volumes, *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881), *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*, and *Memories and Portraits* (1887). The sweet and wise philosophy of life, the genial moralisings on the joys and sorrows which are the lot of every child of man, have gone straight into the hearts of thousands. Such an essay as *The Lantern-bearers*, to take a single instance, must be ranked among the very finest that exist in any language.

Stevenson made no claim to be one of the great poets. Yet his verse, in *A Child's Garden* (1885) and *Underwoods* (1887), is extremely charming, always the work of a fine craftsman, and at times is something more.

Few things in the lives of men of letters are better known than the last days of Stevenson—how, in 1891, he settled at Vailima—how he became a kind of chief among the natives, who styled him Tusitala, the Writer of Tales—how, after several lesser works, he began, in 1894, his last great piece of fiction, *Weir of Hermiston*, based on the history of Lord Braxfield, the hanging judge—and how, one evening, after working on it, he was talking gaily to his wife on the verandah when he suddenly sank down and died. The natives, sorrow-stricken, bore the bier to its abiding-place upon the island's mountain-peak. And there, to-day, the pilgrim to the grave may read upon it his own valiant verses :

Under the wide and starry sky  
Dig the grave and let me lie.  
Glad did I live and gladly die,  
And I laid me down with a will.  
This be the verse you grave for me—  
Here he lies where he longed to be ;  
Home is the sailor, home from sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill.

## § 6

Rudyard Kipling, an original and underivative modern writer, was born in Bombay on December 30, 1865 ; he died in 1936 ; in 1906 he won the Nobel prize. His father, John Lockwood Kipling, was an eminent art professor and museum curator under the Government of India. By descent Rudyard Kipling was endowed with English, Scottish, and Irish blood ; his earliest training gave him a command of Hindustani speech ; and his wanderings over vast tracts of land and sea made him a great citizen of the world and of the British Empire in particular.

Kipling was first heard of in this country in 1886, though in India he had then been well known for three years by the stories and verses which

he contributed to *The Pioneer* of Allahabad, a daily newspaper of which he was assistant editor. We now know these writings, which first appeared in London in the form of the *Rupee Books*, as *Plain Tales* and *Departmental Ditties*. It is said that these were rather tolerated than welcomed by the editor, who preferred to see Kipling concentrate on leading articles and other ordinary newspaper matter. The *Rupee Books*, and the appearance of such stories as "The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvany" and "The Head of the District" in *Macmillan's Magazine*, blazed Kipling's trail into the hearts of English readers. Then began his astounding rise to fame and imperial importance. In a chapter which must be as short as this one any connected narrative of that progress cannot be attempted, but it may be well to give the dates of Kipling's chief works in tabular form as follows :

- 1886. *Departmental Ditties*.
- 1887. *Plain Tales from the Hills*.
- 1888-89. *Soldiers Three, The Story of the Gadsbys, Under the Deodar, The Phantom Rickshaw, Wee Willie Winkie*.
- 1890. *Life's Handicap*.
- 1891. *The Light that Failed*.
- 1892. *Barrack Room Ballads*.
- 1893. *Many Inventions*.
- 1894. *The Jungle Book*.
- 1895. *The Second Jungle Book*.
- 1896. *The Seven Seas*.
- 1897. *Captains Courageous*.
- 1898. *The Day's Work*.
- 1899. *Stalky & Co. and From Sea to Sea*.
- 1901. *Kim*.
- 1902. *Just-So Stories*.
- 1903. *The Five Nations*.
- 1904. *Traffics and Discoveries*.
- 1906. *Puck of Pook's Hill*.
- 1909. *Actions and Reactions*.
- 1910. *Rewards and Fairies*.
- 1913-18. *The Harbour Watch (a play), The New Armies in Training, France at War, Fringes of the Fleet, Sea Warfare, A Diversity of Creatures, The Years Between*.
- 1919. *Inclusive Verse*.

When we recall—if indeed we can—the originality, the sleepless energy of observation, the voracious appetite for facts and ways of life, and the magnetic appeal of it all to millions in all English-speaking lands which are embodied in these books, the list here given becomes amazing. Kipling has revealed India, Canada, Egypt, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, the seven seas, and the British Army and Navy to the men of his own



period in the spirit and terms of that period. And it must be added that he has himself in a measure created that spirit and invented those terms.

It was impossible that any writer of his range and drive could gain universal acceptance, and it has followed from this that while Kipling secured a greater number and variety of admirers than any other living English writer, he also found a great number of opponents and irreconcilable critics. He has been abused under such names as "banjo bardlet," "an imperial megalomaniac," "a tinpot ear-tickler," "the drum-major in Joe's Brummagem brass band," and many others.

The main and brief task is to seek out the true nature of Kipling's achievement; and by his achievement must be understood, here, his purely literary standing as judged in the quiet of one's own mind, and by reasonable standards of judgment. Just as we do not appraise the historic and relative value of a victory by a London "mafficking" night, so one cannot appraise Kipling's true literary character and value until we forget the rush and racket of his wonderful career.

It may be useful to suggest some of his mistakes. As a story-writer he discloses very small impulse to portray individual character, or even human nature as such. He is essentially a portrayer of collective or class character. He has drawn many a man for the Empire's sake, for the Army's sake, for the Civil Service's sake, for the Tribe's sake, and in doing so he has often touched us profoundly in our collective character as Empire-makers, as soldiers, as a governing people, as managers of alien races and families of men. He has done this with such vigour that he has shaken the whole house, as it were, with his bell-ringing and clarion summonses. Yet, singly, we remain comparatively unconquered; singly, men do not find in Kipling's books an intimate message to their hearts and spiritual needs. This intimacy and depth of appeal is denied to him. What is the difference between Byron's power over his generation and Kipling's over his? It is surely a difference of literary character and of fundamental qualities. It is a difference in literary fusion.

This fusion is a large thing, not easily explained. Fusion is that "third power" to which a composition must rise before it can even be considered as a piece of enduring literature. Fusion is the taking up of lower things into higher; it is a pervading reference to the master facts and conceptions; it is the postulation of the soul in many phases; it is the humility of effort, the tenderness of power, the anticipation of the eternal query, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" And this power of fusion is surely Kipling's lack. The fire and the whirlwind are his, but not the still, small voice, except very rarely, as in *Recessional*. This is a great hymn; yet it will not compare, in depth and permanency of appeal, with "O God, our help in ages past."



The abundance and sharpness of vision which is commonly considered Kipling's greatest possession must not be confused with true literary power over things seen. Kipling assuredly has the power to make us see as he sees, but there is a sense of physical strain and of the transitoriness of physical effort. It is true that while we read we are gripped, amused, touched to tears, and generally annexed. And if this is enough, if this domination is the mark of true literature, then our time has shown such literary judgment in its worship of Kipling that the critic's occupation may be considered gone. The generation that can so promptly choose and applaud the real thing has no need of guidance.

But if true literature is something more than masterful diction and plenteous vision, if its gifts do not end with ivory and apes and peacocks, but rather begin with these and end with the ineffable traffic between spirit and spirit, if its last purpose is not to give news of the world but rather by things that are not to bring to naught things that are, then it may be suggested, without hesitation, as without offence, that Kipling's writings are distinguished from all others of our time in giving much to the reader and little to the man.

Look at Kipling's work how and where one will, it grips you and leaves go ; it is, and then it is not. His rhythms may haunt the ear, and the eye may recover the dusty parade-ground of Fort Amara ; or the long red fires of the railway sleepers burning the dead whom even Jim Hawkins could not save ; or Durga Dass, in his cee-spring buggy, complacently deciding to pull down the house where Amecra lies dead ; or the view from Lalun's window, the red tombs of dead emperors beyond the river, and very far away through the blue heat-blaze a glint of the snows of the Himalayas, or that unforgettable picture :

By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin' eastward to the sea,  
There's a Burma girl a-settin', and I know she thinks o' me ;  
For the wind is in the palm-trees, and the temple-bells they say :  
" Come you back, you British soldier ; come you back to Mandalay !  
Come you back to Mandalay,  
Where the old Flotilla lay.

Can't you 'ear their paddles chunkin' from Rangoon to Mandalay ?  
On the road to Mandalay,  
Where the flyin'-fishes play,  
An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer  
China 'crost the Bay !—

all these, and many another scene may return by chance, in the hurly-burly of the memory, but do they obey any imperative call of thought or feeling ?

Yet there is one work of Kipling's which escapes this great limitation.



It is now generally held that his best work is the *Jungle Book* (1894), and this chapter has been written in vain if it does not suggest why this judgment is so general and so just. Because he has no impulse to draw individual character but only collective character, Kipling succeeds wonderfully in a field where only tribal or collective character calls for portrayal, and where the emotions evoked can be studied with all the personal detachment inherent in the nature of the subject. Where real individuality does not exist, or at least is not capable of literary portraiture, we accept the character of a family or a species of animals as supreme, and when that is embodied, as Kipling has embodied it, in "Shere Khan," the tiger, and "Bagheera," the black panther, Baloo, the sleepy brown bear, and the contemptible Bandar-log, the monkeys, and, above all, in the man-cub Mowgli—that wonderful link between man and beast—then there is an end to criticism and limitation. Here Kipling has brought his ascertained powers to the material on which they can produce a unique effect. We might quote, did space allow, and for the joy of doing so, the scene in which Mowgli defends himself to his tutors Baloo and Bagheera, for having consorted for an hour with the Monkey People.

There are many other aspects of Kipling, as story and fact, which cannot be considered here. One, which has been pointed out by George Moore, must be obvious to all: that is his amazing vocabulary. Unfortunately, even this contains a vast amount of slang which often appears to be introduced for slang's sake, and not as a necessary instrument of language and thought. And George Moore adds, "He writes with the eye that appreciates all that the eye can see, but of the heart he knows nothing, for the heart cannot be observed; his characters are therefore external, and they are stationary." This judgment goes, perhaps, rather too far; but it suggests certain fundamental characteristics which render it doubtful whether, another century hence, Kipling's power will be felt in anything like the measure in which it has been felt in our time.

## § 7

It is obvious that in this OUTLINE it is impossible even to mention the names of the great army of considerable writers who wrote in English in the later years of the nineteenth century. Thanks largely to the enormous popularity of Dickens and Thackeray, the novel became by far the most common form of literary expression, and novels poured from the printing-presses in ever-increasing numbers. It will suffice here to refer to one only of the later Victorian novelists.

George Gissing was born in Wakefield in 1857 and died in 1903. His first novel, *Workers in the Dawn*, was published when he was twenty-two.

Gissing was a fastidious and conscientious literary artist, but his work brought him pitifully small pecuniary returns. He worked for a time as a clerk in Liverpool. He half starved in America. He was for a time an underpaid "crammer" in London. He lived in cellars and garrets, grudging four and sixpence a week for his lodging and being fearful of paying more than sixpence for a meal. He was a recluse with few friends, reasonably fearful of the life that he found so hard, but always a genuine artist refusing to write below his best. He had an intense admiration for Dickens, but he had none of the master's humour. H. G. Wells has said of Gissing: "He had some sort of blindness towards his fellow-men, so that he, who was so copiously intelligent in the things of the study, misunderstood, blundered, was nervously diffident, and wilful and spasmodic in common affairs, in employment and buying and selling and the normal conflict of intercourse." In his novel *The Odd Women*, Gissing speaks for himself when he says: "Life has always been full of worrying problems for me. I can't take things in the simple way that comes natural to other men." His experience and his temperament are reflected in his books. *New Grub Street* (1891), one of the best novels that he ever wrote, is a revelation of the hardship of the writer's lot; *The Nether World* (1889) is a demonstration of the demoralising ugliness of poverty; *Born in Exile* (1892) is the story of an impecunious scholar, yearning for the beautiful and compelled to live amid the sordid. Towards the end of the century a more than usually successful novel enabled Gissing to make the journey to Italy of which he had dreamed for years, and the result was a very beautiful book, *By the Ionian Sea*. The dignified semi-autobiography, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, was published in the year of his death. Gissing was also the author of the best of all the critical studies of Dickens.

## § 8

Henry Austin Dobson was perhaps the most charming of later Victorian essayists. Austin Dobson, who was born in 1840 and died in 1921, was for years a clerk in the Board of Trade, but despite the modernity of his surroundings he lived in the eighteenth century, writing always exquisitely of Chesterfield and Walpole, Goldsmith and Johnson, Peg Woffington and Richard Steele. Austin Dobson was a poet of pleasant and most attractive artificiality. The following rondel, *The Wanderer*, may be quoted as an example of his muse:

Love comes back to his vacant dwelling—  
 The old, old Love that we knew of yore!  
 We see him stand by the open door,  
 With his great eyes sad, and his bosom swelling.



He makes as though in our arms repelling,  
 He fain would lie as he lay before :  
 Love comes back to his vacant dwelling—  
 The old, old Love that we knew of yore !

Ah ! who shall help us from over-spelling,  
 That sweet forgotten, forbidden lore !  
 E'en as we doubt in our hearts once more,  
 With a rush of tears to our eyelids welling  
 Love comes back to his vacant dwelling.

The greatest name of these years in criticism is that of John Morley, who was born in 1838 and died in 1923. The latter half of his life was devoted to politics, but in his first period he edited the *Fortnightly Review*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, and *Macmillan's Magazine*, and wrote his famous critical studies of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot. Morley inherited the sceptical tradition of John Stuart Mill and the middle Victorians, and he was in keen sympathy with the group of great French philosophers who prepared the way for the Revolution. He was a gifted writer, and his literary fame rests mainly on these three studies. His books on Rousseau, Voltaire, Cromwell, and his great biographies of Cobden and Gladstone will be long read, for they had qualities all their own which cannot be superseded. One of these is a firm and helpful wisdom of life conveyed in reflections which at once illuminate his subject and life and character generally. In his *Rousseau*, for example, you alight on such memorable little homilies as this :

The spirit of man moves in mysterious ways, and expands like the plants of the field with strange and silent stirrings. It is one of the chief tests of worthiness and freedom from vulgarity of soul in us, to be able to have faith that this expansion is a reality, and the most important of all realities. We do not rightly seize the type of Socrates if we can never forget that he was the husband of Xanthippe, nor David's if we can only think of him as the murderer of Uriah, nor Peter's if we can simply remember that he denied his Master. Our vision is only blindness, if we can never bring ourselves to see the possibilities of deep mystic aspiration behind the vile outer life of a man.

Probably no writer influenced Morley's own life and character more than Wordsworth, and we cannot do better than quote a few lines from the essay which he contributed to a complete edition of the poet published in 1888 :

What Wordsworth does is to assuage, to reconcile, to fortify. He has not Shakespeare's richness and vast compass, nor Milton's sublime and unflagging strength, nor Dante's severe, vivid, ardent force of vision. . . . But Wordsworth, at any rate, by his secret of bringing the infinite into common life, has the skill to lead us, so long as we yield ourselves to his influence, into moods of settled

peace, to touch "the depth and not the tumult of the soul," to give us quietness, strength, steadfastness, and purpose, whether to do or to endure.

In defining Wordsworth's inner life and outlook Lord Morley revealed much of his own.

## § 9

Lafcadio Hearn is one of the most remarkable figures in later English literary history. His father was an Irish military surgeon who ran away with a Greek girl, and Lafcadio was named after the Greek island of Lefkada, where he was born in 1850. When he was six his family went back to Ireland, and soon afterwards his mother left his father, who married again, and Lafcadio was brought up by a great-aunt, a pious Roman Catholic who sent the boy to Ushaw College, Durham. He appears to have quarrelled with his relations, and when he was nineteen he was penniless in New York, afterwards earning his living for some years as a journalist in Cincinnati, New Orleans, and the West Indies.

In 1890 he went to Japan, where at last he found a land that he could love. He became a teacher of English at the University of Tokio, married a Japanese wife, became a naturalised Japanese, and adopted the Buddhist religion. He died in 1904. Hearn was a small, swarthy, silent man, very shy and sensitive, with qualities that made it easy for him to understand the Oriental mind. His books, indeed, were the first important revelation of the Japanese to Western readers. As a literary artist he was influenced by Théophile Gautier, caring more than for anything else for perfection of expression. Often he is mannered, still more often he is rhapsodical. But he is always a keen observer, especially of the things to which he was most sympathetic, and never wearying in his adopted country "of watching this picturesque life—of studying the costumes, brilliant with butterfly colours—and the statuesque semi-nudity of labouring hundreds—and the untaught grace of attitudes—and the simplicity of manners." The Japanese themselves accept Hearn as an accurate interpreter of their lives. A Japanese writer has declared that his books are "in perfect accord with the sweet glamour of old Japan." His best-known writings are *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*, *Out of the East*, *Gleanings in Buddha Fields* (1897), *In Ghostly Japan*, and *Japan*, an attempt at interpretation.

Among the later Victorian critics, Leslie Stephen, the author of *The History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (1876–1881), born in 1832 and dying in 1904, and Andrew Lang, who was born in 1844 and died in 1912, are the best remembered. Lang was a writer of catholic interest and versatile achievement. He translated Homer into musical



prose. He wrote biographies. He was a poet and an authority on folk-lore, he was the author of a history of English literature and an admirable life of Joan of Arc. Andrew Lang was a man of most attractive character, affectionately described by Robert Louis Stevenson as "Andrew of the brindled hair."

## READING LIST

*Victorian Literature*, by G. K. Chesterton (Home University Library), affords an extraordinarily stimulating study of most of the writers treated in this chapter.

### GEORGE MEREDITH :

Messrs. Constable publish the works of George Meredith in various editions, including *Beauchamp's Career*, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, *The Egoist*, *Diana of the Crossways*, etc. etc. Also Meredith's Complete Poems, in one volume, with notes by G. M. Trevelyan, and a volume of Selected Poems ; and *Letters of George Meredith*, and that excellent guide, *Poetry and Philosophy of George Meredith*, by G. M. Trevelyan. Siegfried Sassoon has written a fine study (Constable).

### THOMAS HARDY :

The works of Thomas Hardy are published by Macmillan, including *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, *The Return of the Native*, *Life's Little Ironies*, *Wessex Poems and other Verses*, *The Dynasts*, etc. etc.

*Thomas Hardy, a Critical Study*, by Lascelles Abercrombie (Martin Secker).

*Hardy, the Novelist*, by Lord David Cecil (Constable).

### SAMUEL BUTLER :

*The Way of All Flesh*, in the World's Classics. (There is an exhaustive and over-eulogistic *Life*, by Festing Jones.) *Erewhon* is published in the Penguin editions.

Butler's complete works were published originally by Fiffeld. There were 18 volumes, including the delightful Note-Books. His work is now published by Cape.

### ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON :

Messrs. Chatto & Windus publish most of Stevenson's works, including *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*, *An Inland Voyage*, *Memories and Portraits*, *The New Arabian Nights*, and *Collected Poems* (Underwoods, Ballads, Songs of Travel).

Messrs. Longmans publish *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde with other Fables, More New Arabian Nights—The Dynamiter, The Wrong Box, and A Child's Garden of Verses.*

Graham Balfour's *Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Methuen).

Sir Walter Raleigh's *Robert Louis Stevenson* (Arnold).

RUDYARD KIPLING :

Messrs. Macmillan publish various editions of most of Rudyard Kipling's works, including *Many Inventions, Soldiers Three, Kim, Actions and Reactions, Just-So Stories, Poems from History, The Jungle Book.*

Messrs. Methuen publish *Barrack Room Ballads and other Verses, The Seven Seas, The Years Between, etc.*

*Rudyard Kipling, a Critical Study*, by Cyril Falls (Martin Secker).

R. Thurston Hopkins's *Rudyard Kipling, a Character Study* (Simpkin Marshall).

GEORGE GISSING :

*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (Constable, various editions).

AUSTIN DOBSON :

Most of his prose and the best of his verse appear in the *World's Classics*. *Collected Poems* is published by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner.

VISCOUNT MORLEY :

Messrs. Macmillan publish Viscount Morley's works, including *Rousseau*, 2 vols., *Diderot and the Encyclopædists*, 2 vols., *Voltaire, Burke, The Life of Richard Cobden*, 2 vols., and *Life of Gladstone*, various editions.

LAFCADIO HEARN :

*Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*, 2 vols., *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields*, and other works are published by Cape.

*Appreciations of Poetry* (Heinemann).

Elizabeth Bisland's *Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn*, 2 vols. (Constable).



## DRAMATIC LITERATURE

## § 1

IN his book *The Old Drama and the New*, William Archer (1856-1924) states that "whatever the reason, the fact remains that, as far as dramatic authorship is concerned, the whole century from 1720 to 1820 was a dreary desert broken by a single oasis—the comedies of Goldsmith and Sheridan." Sheridan, like Goldsmith, was an Irishman. Richard Brinsley Butler Sheridan was born in Dublin on October 30, 1751, and, like Goldsmith, was of Anglo-Saxon origin. Life was kinder to Sheridan than it was to his older countryman. It had been hard for Goldsmith to get his plays performed, but it was easy for Sheridan to do so. The young man took fame and fortune in an easy stride. He was the husband of a celebrated beauty and the author of a great and prosperous comedy at twenty-three. He was running up to distinction almost at the moment that Goldsmith was creeping into his grave. The reputation he got in the theatre was enriched by the reputation he got in Society and Parliament; and it was hard to tell whether he was better known to his contemporaries as the author of *The School for Scandal* or as the impeacher of Warren Hastings. He wrote seven plays, *The Rivals* (1775), *St. Patrick's Day, or The Scheming Lieutenant*, *The Duenna* (a comic opera), *The School for Scandal* (1777), *The Critic, or A Tragedy Rehearsed* (1779), *A Trip to Scarborough*, and *Pizarro*, an uncommonly dull tragedy in five acts. He died on July 7, 1816, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

The difference between his work and that of Goldsmith is profound. Goldsmith was full of fun: Sheridan was full of wit. The first is a matter of spirit; the second is a matter of mind. A great wit can be destitute of a sense of fun. Goldsmith's work has none of the sheer brilliance which illuminates almost the whole of Sheridan's writing, but neither has the countryside got the brilliance of a city. All Sheridan's defects are forgotten and forgiven because of the delight we get from the brilliant dialogue and the lively characters. What genius was in the young man of twenty-three who wrote *The Rivals* and created the character of Mrs. Malaprop! "Sure!" she said, "if I reprehend anything in this world, it is the use of my oracular tongue, and a nice derangement of epitaphs."

*The School for Scandal* stands above all Sheridan's plays. Both *The Rivals* and *The Critic, or A Tragedy Rehearsed* are plays of great quality,

enough, by themselves, to have created a high reputation for their author. Sheridan's one tragedy, *Pizarro*, is an incredibly dull piece, interesting only because it shows that even a great wit can sometimes be a great bore. But it was something of a miracle that inside four years three indisputably great comedies, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *The Rivals*, and *The School for Scandal*, should suddenly have disturbed the stream of tedious stuff which had flowed through the English theatre for fifty years and was to continue its flow for nearly a century. Goldsmith and Sheridan were brilliant flares which showed how deep the surrounding darkness was, and when they went out the darkness was deeper. After their death, the drama in England rapidly dropped into the gutter, and was not drawn out of it again until a hundred years had passed.

## § 2

It is to Ibsen that Europe owes the renaissance of dramatic literature. He, who was born at Skien, in South Norway, on March 20, 1828, was first of all a chemist, then a journalist, and then director of Ole Bull's theatre at Bergen. In 1857 he was appointed director of the National Theatre at Christiania, which became bankrupt in 1862. Ibsen had then written a number of heroic plays and the first of his social satires, *Love's Comedy*, the latter making him very unpopular. This unpopularity, together with the failure of the National Theatre and the great failure, in his judgment, of his country to fight for the Danes in their struggle with Germany, made Ibsen sick of his own people, and in 1864 he left Norway and went to live in various places, chiefly Rome, Dresden, and Munich, where he remained until 1892, in which year he returned to Christiania. He was reluctantly pensioned by the Norwegian parliament in 1866. In that and the next year, he published *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*, dramatic poems of great power and quality which are, perhaps, his best work. *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* are companion pieces, the first being a picture of a good man who falls into disaster because of his refusal ever to compromise his ideals, while the second is a picture of a man whose life is wrecked by a romantic waywardness and continual acceptance of the unideal "reality."

As a poet, although he was a great one, Ibsen had hardly any influence; but as a social reformer, as a commentator on systems, his influence was extraordinary. Sometimes, indeed, he had an influence which was absent from his intention. *The Doll's House* (1880), for example, caused him to be regarded as a strong advocate of women's suffrage when, in fact, he was not particularly in favour of votes for women or votes for anybody. He was a passionate advocate of personal freedom, but personal freedom



was not necessarily a matter of voting. Ibsen, sometimes regarded as a pessimist, had a profound faith in the future of mankind. It was his very faith in man's future which earned the reputation of pessimist for him; for it has always been the custom of ultimately optimistic men to be exceedingly and volubly pessimistic about man as he now is. He found very little that was worth while in contemporary institutions, social or political, because he found that these institutions, in greater or less degree, prevented the individual from exercising his full freedom. His plays are well-made plays, as was inevitable in the work of a man who had spent many years in the theatre, but they are not well-made in the sense in which the French dramatists, Scribe and Sardou, made their plays well. Scribe and Sardou were more interested in the mechanics of the drama than in the mystery and motives of it.

But Ibsen was not interested in machinery, except in so far as it enabled him to do his work. Making the machine *was* Sardou's work, but the machine was merely a tool to Ibsen, who constantly used it for purposes to which it was not suitable. He overloaded the machine with mysticism or symbolism, and packed it too tightly with psychology. Sometimes, as in *Peer Gynt*, he rambled and ranged so widely and so long that the machine broke down, as far as actual performance of the play went. But, with these reservations, it may fairly be said that his plays were deftly made.

Contemporary with Henrik Ibsen was August Strindberg, a Swedish dramatist of overwrought mentality, who was born at Stockholm in 1849. Strindberg is constantly contrasted with Ibsen, partly because the one was Norwegian and the other Swedish, but chiefly because of the superficial assumption that Ibsen was a feminist in the political sense, while Strindberg was violently antipathetic to women, although he had married and been divorced from three of them. Strindberg derived his inspirations from the German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, who like himself was mentally unbalanced. Sexual dementia prevented Strindberg from regarding a woman as an individual with a right to freedom, and it was because he could not bear to see Nora in *The Doll's House* revolting against the authority of her husband that he became, so it seemed, the antagonist of Ibsen. Ibsen died in 1906, at the age of seventy-eight, and Strindberg in 1912, at the age of sixty-three. The centenary year, 1949, witnessed a revival of interest.

### § 3

The drama in England was in a state of serious decline from the period of Goldsmith and Sheridan until the year 1880 or thereabouts, when Arthur



W. Pinero, a young actor who was born in London in 1855, began to write plays, mostly in the conventional manner. He wrote some farces, such as *The Magistrate*, and some sentimental plays, such as *Sweet Lavender* and *Trelawney of the Wells*, and then, feeling a strong draught from Norway, changed his manner and wrote *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, in which Mrs. Patrick Campbell made her name. This piece was followed by a remarkable variety of plays, ranging from *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* and *His House in Order* to *Mid-Channel* and *Thunderbolt, Letty, Iris*, and *The Enchanted Cottage*. There is a greater variety in Pinero's work than in that of most dramatists, and he is certain of a high place among English writers for the theatre.

Henry Arthur Jones, who was born in Buckinghamshire in 1851, began his career as a dramatist by writing conventional melodramas, one of which, written in collaboration with Henry Herman and entitled *The Silver King*, is still occasionally revived. It raised melodrama to a higher condition than it had been in for many years, and it won praise from so fastidious a critic as Matthew Arnold. Henry Jones, who wrote over a hundred plays, resembles Sir Arthur Pinero in the variety of his work, but his intellect is not so powerful as Pinero's, although his dialogue is more natural and his sense of comedy often more brilliant.

Sir Arthur Pinero and Henry Jones raised the English drama from the mud and placed it in a position where it could command respect. They made the way easy for those who were to follow them, and it is doubtful whether Bernard Shaw, who was born in Dublin in 1856, would have found his way on to the stage at all, hard though it was for him to get there, if these two men had not preceded him. Oscar Wilde, the scintillating Irishman, who died in 1900 at the age of forty-four, revived the comedy of wit and manners which had fallen out of use after the death of Sheridan, and his plays, because of the surrounding desolation, seemed more brilliant than in fact they were. Only one of them, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, is on the Sheridan and Congreve level, the rest being paltry melodramas, plastered over with irrelevant epigrams. But his early *Poems* (1881) had great decorative merit; and the much later *Ballad of Reading Gaol* is a masterpiece of restrained pathos and simple yet very effective diction. His novel, *Dorian Gray*, became an æsthetes' favourite. Moreover, he wrote brilliantly on art and literature. It was not until 1892 that G. B. Shaw's first play, *Widowers' Houses*, was performed, and it was not a success; indeed, Shaw did not become popularly known as a dramatist until the years 1904-1906, when his work was done at the Court Theatre with great success. He had then written a considerable number of his forty-odd plays, most of which were familiar in book form but not on the stage. *Man and Superman*, *John Bull's Other Island*, *Major Barbara*, *The*



*Doctor's Dilemma*, *Saint Joan* (1923) and *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* (1939) are among his best work ; but all of his plays, even the slightest, are stimulating and full of thought and wit. *Heartbreak House* is immensely interesting and impressive ; but every Shaw play yields its quota of his characteristic philosophy of evolution, satire, and wit.

Another play, or another group of five plays which form a pentalogy entitled *Back to Methuselah* (1921), deals with the history of mankind from the time of Adam and Eve until a period set "as far as thought can reach." The whole of Shaw's work is suffused with his religious theory, that God is an Imperfect Being seeking to make Himself Perfect and using for His purpose any instrument that will serve His purpose. If the instrument is useless or can be superseded by a better one, it is scrapped ! This doctrine is most obviously expressed in the one-act play called *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet*. Posnet, a drunken waster who has just escaped hanging for stealing a horse, has received a spiritual shock as great as that received by St. Paul on the road to Damascus. Suddenly God's purpose, as Shaw understands it, is revealed to Blanco, who announces it in these terms :

You bet He didn't make us for nothing ; and He wouldn't have made us at all if He could have done His work without us. By Gum, that must be what we're for ! He'd never have made us to be rotten blackguards like me, and good-for-nothing rips like Feemy. He made me because He had a job for me. He let me run loose till the job was ready ; and then I had to come along and do it, hanging or no hanging . . .

And later Blanco asserts his morality thus :

No. No more paths. No more broad and narrow. No more good and bad. There's no good and bad ; but by Jimmy, gents, there's a rotten game and there's a great game. I played the rotten game ; but the great game was played on me ; and now I'm for the great game every time. . . .

Whether there is any real difference between this doctrine and that of Calvin, other than one of detail and terminology—for the difference between *good* and *bad* and *rotten game* and *great game* seems hardly worth discussing—is hard to say, but it is clear that with the advent of Shaw to the stage we are back again in the region of religion, where the great drama always begins. In the strictest sense of the word, Shaw was a writer of religious plays. His wit and intellectual verve and a sort of moral fury which he possessed have enabled him to pass off on audiences a great quantity of argument and doctrinal statement which could hardly have been passed off on them by anyone else. His plays are full of lengthy speeches, and they are sometimes actionless. *Getting Married* (1901), for example, is a prolonged debate, while another argumentative piece, *Misalliance*, has actually been described by Shaw himself as a disquisitive



play. Many of his characters are mere mouthpieces for the enunciation of their author's opinions. Nevertheless, the plays form a more unified body of work than the complete plays of almost any other dramatist.

John Galsworthy's plays, during this period of revival of drama with a social purpose, took their place alongside those of Shaw. They were more conventionally constructed, less witty, but because of his great pity and sympathy for the underdog and the misfits of society were often moving and were always intensely dramatic. Galsworthy understood the dramatic value of conflicting loyalties: class loyalties, personal loyalties, racial loyalties; and out of the clash, constructed his dramas.

Practically all the plays written by meritable dramatists at this time in England were of a critical temper. They might even be called sociological pieces. Human society was overhauled and examined by Shaw, Galsworthy, Granville-Barker, St. John Ervine (who wrote comedies of manners that were close to the critical manner of Sheridan), and many others. Dr. Harley Granville-Barker was a playwright of much distinction, and far less tendentious than Shaw and Galsworthy. He was witty, aseptic, urbanely trenchant; moreover, he possessed an acute sense of dramatic propriety in the matter of the theatre's limitations. In addition to several excellent one-acters, he wrote *The Voysey Inheritance* (1909), *Waste*, *The Madras House*, *The Secret Life*. He was also an admirable critic of the drama. Eugène Brieux (extravagantly described by Shaw as "the most important dramatist west of Russia who had confronted Europe since the death of Ibsen") in France, and a very large number of dramatists in Germany, were all engaged in this dramatic criticism of social systems.

In Russia, a remarkable man of genius, Anton Chekhov, was writing plays, such as *The Cherry Orchard*, which were uncanny in the clairvoyant precision with which the fall of society, as it then existed, was depicted. Chekhov has become recognised as the greatest of all Russian dramatists (beside being a sensitive short-story writer). His plays embody the tragedy and frustration of individualism. Each person in them is a lonely spirit working out the destiny inherent in his or her own character. There is little action, but an almost Greek sense of fate. The pieces end without climax: "slices of life." They created European theatre history when they were first produced at the famous Moscow Arts Theatre, and have now become accepted in the intelligent theatres of the world. The four great plays, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Three Sisters*, *The Cherry Orchard*, and *The Seagull* are among the world's dramatic masterpieces.

Unique among all these sociological dramatists was the figure of Sir James Barrie (1860-1937), whose best work is in his plays and who contented himself with telling fantastic and sometimes sentimental stories, although even he could not keep himself entirely free from the temper



of his time, for his best play, *The Admirable Crichton*, is a definite criticism of society, and another, *Little Mary*, is as nearly in the manner of Brieux and Shaw as it is ever possible for a play by Sir James to be. The Great War stirred him to a mystical mood out of which came the strange play, *Mary Rose*. But, on the whole, he was content to deal in fantasy and sentiment and a whimsical wisdom about human things. Barrie's great discovery is that it is the mother woman who really matters in the world, and his philosophy is summarised in his masterpiece of fooling, *Peter Pan*. Life is an adventure, and to the man who understands life, death must be an awfully fine adventure too.

## READING LIST

William Archer's *The Old Drama and the New* (Heinemann).

Ashley Dukes's delightful book, *Drama*, in the Home University Library.

Allardyce Nicoll's *The Development of the Theatre* (Harrap).

Sheridan's Plays can be obtained in the Everyman's Library (Dent).

Heinemann publish the Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen, in 11 vols., edited by William Archer. A few of the plays can be obtained in the Everyman's Library (Dent), and R. Ellis-Roberts's fine translation of *Peer Gynt* is in the World's Classics.

Heinemann publish Sir Arthur W. Pinero's Plays.

Macmillan publish many of Henry Arthur Jones's Plays.

Oscar Wilde's plays, poems, fiction, criticism: all are published by Methuen, who also publish the biography by Hesketh Pearson.

An immense literature has grown up concerning Wilde.

G. Bernard Shaw's Plays are published by Constable.

Shaw's Biography, by Hesketh Pearson (Constable), is as good an interpretation as any.

G.B.S. 90: A symposium was published by Hutchinson to celebrate the ninetieth birthday, and on this occasion a new edition of the more important separate plays was issued in the Penguin Books.

John Galsworthy's Plays are published by Duckworth.

A study of *Galsworthy as a Dramatist* (Chapman & Hall) was written by Hermon Ould, himself a playwright of distinction.

Harley Granville-Barker's Plays and literary criticism are published by Sidgwick & Jackson.

Chekhov's Plays are published by Duckworth.

Sir James Barrie's Plays are published by Hodder & Stoughton.

### XXXVIII

#### ENGLISH POETRY AFTER SWINBURNE

THE last of the great Victorians, Swinburne, died at Putney in 1909. Like other and lesser Victorians, he continued to write well into the new century. But his influence reached its zenith with the publication of the Third Series of *Poems and Ballads* in 1889. In 1892 Tennyson "crossed the bar," and it is, therefore, about the year 1890 that the great book of Victorian poetry may be said to have closed, and that of "modern" poetry to have opened. William Watson (1858-1935) maintained the Tennysonian tradition, giving us poems rich in chiselled beauty, of which, perhaps, his *Wordsworth's Grave* (1890) is deservedly the best known.

Here are some stanzas from it, which either as criticism or as poetry are worthy of the subject, which is the highest praise that can be given :

Poet who sleepest by this wandering wave !  
 When thou wast born, what birth-gift hadst thou then ?  
 To thee what wealth was that the Immortals gave,  
 The wealth thou gavest in thy turn to men ?

Not Milton's keen, translunar music thine ;  
 Not Shakespeare's cloudless, boundless human view ;  
 Not Shelley's flush of rose on peaks divine ;  
 Nor yet the wizard twilight Coleridge knew.

What hadst thou that could make so large amends  
 For all thou hadst not and thy peers possessed,  
 Motion and fire, swift means to radiant ends ?—  
 Thou hadst, for weary feet, the gift of rest.

The most obvious form of revolt against Tennysonian standards was to be found in the narrower and more self-conscious "literary" circles of the 'nineties, among a group of poets who, together with artists like Aubrey Beardsley, are often referred to as the "decadents." Much of their work appeared in the periodical volumes of *The Yellow Book*. For these writers who were much influenced by Oscar Wilde, poetry ceased to be a vehicle for the expression of the noblest passions and aspirations of humanity, and became instead a mirror in a stuffy and heavily scented drawing-room, before which, to their own admiration and that of their friends, they paraded themselves in various "æsthetic" and erotic poses.



## § I

The greatest poet whom the eighteen-nineties produced was for a long time almost unknown. A few discerning critics hailed with enthusiasm Francis Thompson's first volume of *Poems* in 1893; but not until after his death in 1907 did his work have more than a slender sale. Thompson's inspiration came from deep springs of rich inner experience, which was only intensified by the bitter circumstances of his outward life. If ever a poet "learned in suffering what he taught in song," that poet was Francis Thompson. He was born in 1859 at Preston. His father was a doctor. Like Shelley, on whom he wrote a great essay, Thompson was a shy, dreamy boy, and was very unhappy at school. In 1878 he was sent to study medicine at Manchester. But, when he should have been learning anatomy, he was reading poetry at the Public Library. As the years went by, and he repeatedly failed in his examinations, the patience of his indulgent, but undiscerning, father, to whom Thompson had never confided his literary ambitions, was exhausted, and the poet was left to fend for himself. With a poor constitution still further weakened by laudanum, to which he had taken after a severe illness—he partly overcame the habit in later years—he reached London without money and with volumes of Blake and Æschylus for his main luggage. In rags he tramped the streets. He slept on the Embankment at nights. He earned odd pence as a boot-black. He sold matches and newspapers on the kerb. In 1887, when hope seemed to be quite dead, he offered several manuscripts to Wilfrid Meynell, who was editing a magazine called *Merrie England*. Mr. Meynell, when he came to read them, was immediately struck by their quality, and sent for their author, who eventually appeared in the editorial room "more ragged and unkempt than the ordinary beggar, with no shirt beneath his coat, and bare feet in broken shoes." The sequel to that visit is one of the romances of modern literary history. Thompson, after much persuasion, was induced to accept the hospitality of Wilfrid Meynell and his wife Alice (1849–1922), whose own verse, though slight in bulk and lacking popular appeal, is in its own austere way among the greatest of modern poetry; her reputation was firmly established by a volume that appeared in 1893, and the volume appearing in 1913 merely confirmed that reputation. In the shelter of the Meynells' home Thompson remained until his death. When at length his fame was established, his father, seeing his name coupled with that of Shelley or Tennyson, exclaimed: "If the lad had but told me!"

Francis Thompson is one of the greatest mystical poets in the English language. Simple indeed he was in spirit; he loved children, and himself possessed the child heart. But his love for long and strange and sometimes

invented words increasingly robbed his work of simplicity of form, and some of his later poems are almost unintelligible. His best verse does not fill more than a small "selected" volume, but poems like *The Hound of Heaven* (included in his first volume—1893), the *Ode to the Setting Sun*, and *The Poppy* are imperishable. Never has the Divine Love that pursues men, even when they seek to flee from it, been visualised with greater power or wealth of imagery than in *The Hound of Heaven*, with its majestic opening lines :

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days ;  
 I fled Him, down the arches of the years ;  
 I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways  
 Of my own mind ; and in the midst of tears  
 I hid from Him, and under running laughter.  
     Up vistaed hopes I sped  
     And shot, precipitated  
 Adown Titanic glooms or chasmèd fears,  
 From those strong feet that followed, followed after.  
     But with unhurrying chase,  
     And unperturbèd pace,  
 Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,  
     They beat—and a Voice beat  
     More instant than the Feet—  
 " All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

There are snatches of Thompson that must haunt the memory of every reader from the moment he first meets with them, such as :

The innocent moon, that nothing does but shine,  
 Moves all the labouring surges of the world.

But the poem, perhaps, which best reveals his spirit, as it wandered lonely through the London streets, is one entitled *The Kingdom of God*, which was found among his papers after his death in 1907.

Most of Thompson's poems were written before the close of the century, though his fame was to come later. He was, moreover, a writer of eloquent prose—witness the *Essay on Shelley*, prized of every Shelley-lover.

The reputations, on the other hand, of several poets who enjoyed success in the 'nineties have since then faded in varying degrees. W. E. Henley, who was also a critic and a great editor, wrote some vivid hospital verses from his own experience as a patient in the Edinburgh Infirmary. He had the power of describing a character in a few lines, and his surgeons, doctors, and nurses actually live upon the printed page. He used the same gift in painting the portraits, physical and spiritual, of some of the famous men who were his friends, an excellent example of his skill in this rare art



being his sonnet on Robert Louis Stevenson. He bore much suffering with fortitude, and could justly say :

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud :  
Beneath the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul.

Henley's poems have recently been reissued, and his fame shows a well-merited tendency to revive. The same cannot be said of Stephen Phillips, whose reputation, once great, suffered almost complete eclipse before his death, at the age of fifty-one, in 1915. Another poet who has fallen into undeserved neglect is John Davidson, whose *Fleet Street Eclogues* and *Ballads*, published in the 'nineties, enjoyed a considerable vogue. Davidson's work, though very uneven, was often vigorous and picturesque. He was, like many greater poets, essentially a moralist—something, it has been truly said, of "a muscular Christian." He had a robust faith in human personality, and was perpetually at warfare with the cramping conventions and the evil social conditions that warp the development of the individual soul. Melancholy clouded the latter years of his lonely life at Penzance, near which place he drowned himself in 1909.

## § 2

W. B. Yeats (1865–1939) is Ireland's greatest poet, and many years before his death he was assured of immortality. He had the distinction of being awarded (in 1923) the Nobel prize for literature. Nothing that he did was ever accomplished by chance, but by inspired imagining and the most exquisite handicraft. The poet was aware of his own mission, and has written this testament of it : "I must leave my myths and symbols," he has said, "to explain themselves as the years go by and one poem lights up another. . . . I would, if I could, add to that majestic heraldry of the poets, that great and complicated inheritance of images, which written literature has substituted for the greater and more complex inheritance

of spoken tradition, some new heraldic images gathered from the lips of the common people. Christianity and the old Nature faith have lain down side by side in the cottages, and I would proclaim that peace as loudly as I can among the kingdoms of poetry, where there is no peace that is not joyous, no battle that does not give life instead of death."

Readers who know little of Yeats are familiar with *The Lake Island of Innisfree*, one of the most exquisite poems in the English language.

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made :  
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day  
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore ;  
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

In the magic of the little play *The Land of Heart's Desire*, there is a song that has all the Irish fairyland in it, with its sorrow and gladness :

The wind blows out of the gates of the day,  
The wind blows over the lonely heart,  
And the lonely heart is withered away,  
While the fairies dance in a place apart,  
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,  
Tossing their milk-white arms in the air ;  
For they hear the wind laugh and murmur and sing  
Of a land where even the old are fair,  
And even the wise are merry of tongue ;  
And I heard a reed of Coolaney say :  
" When the wind has laughed and murmured and sung  
The lonely of heart must wither away."

Another great figure in the Irish literary movement is "A.E."—George W. Russell (1867–1935), mystic-intellectual, intellectual-lyric and reflective poet, and imaginative, somewhat mystical philosopher and essayist. Important intrinsically, he has also exercised a tremendous influence, both by his intellectual stature and by his spiritual integrity. More recent is James Stephens, whose Irish qualities were tinged with a pixy cosmopolitanism ; this very individual figure is the author of *The Crock of Gold*, prose-writer as well as poet. Slightly Yeats's junior is Lord Dunsany, poet and short-story writer, who, like Yeats, was early influenced by the work of "Fiona MacLeod" (William Sharp), prophet of the Celtic Twilight movement in literature.



## § 3

But for Rudyard Kipling's influence, we should not have had John Masefield, one of the greatest of contemporary poets. We may dislike Kipling's excesses, but we have to admit that it was his vigorous spirit which first brought down the Muse from her shy retreat upon Parnassus into the common life of the market-place. In more recent years poetry had been kept in comparative seclusion. Certain subjects, certain aspects of life, were held to be "poetical"; but the rough-and-tumble, everyday life of ordinary men and women was not one of them. Kipling revolutionised that view, and others were to follow him who should seek the market-place because, behind and within its vulgarities, they knew much of the finest gold of human character and fellowship to be hidden. Of these was John Masefield, who was born in 1878, and who as a boy ran away to sea, where he served before the mast. His earliest books were small volumes of "salt-water ballads," full of the true brine:

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,  
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;  
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,  
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.

Some readers prefer this, his earlier, style; but for the majority Masefield's most significant work is probably to be found in the long narrative poems that he has given us in later years. Of these, the first was *The Everlasting Mercy*, which aroused a storm of controversy when it appeared in the *English Review* in 1911. Because it struck a new note in poetry, some of the more conservative critics said that it was not poetry at all. But the critics have vanished into the oblivion of the newspaper files, and *The Everlasting Mercy* remains—one of the greatest poems the present century has produced. The story it tells is a simple one. It describes the "conversion" of a village blackguard. It describes it, however, not merely from the outside, but, with rare spiritual sympathy, from the inside, so that we are ourselves able to share the emotions of a darkened soul finding the light. At first, in verse of ruthless realism, we are shown Saul Kane as he originally is—a coarse, sensual, drunken prize-fighter, who cannot even poach in a sportsmanlike spirit, but must needs trespass on the recognised "preserves" of a friend:

Now when he saw me set that snare—  
He tells me "Get to Hell from there.  
This field is mine," he says, "by right;  
If you poach here, there'll be a fight.

## THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

Out now," he says, "and quit my wire—  
It's mine." . . . "It ain't." . . . "You put." . . .  
"You liar."  
"You cloy put." . . . "You bloody liar."

But even in Saul Kane there is a latent spark of good, and one night it is fanned by a Quaker lady missionary who visits The Lion, where he is drinking. Here is the beginning of his transformation :

From three long hours of gin and smokes,  
And two girls' breath and fifteen blokes',  
A warmish night and windows shut,  
The room stank like a fox's gut . . .  
Jane slept beside me in the chair,  
And I got up—I wanted air.

I opened window wide and leaned  
Out of that pigsty of the fiend,  
And felt a cool wind go like grace  
About the sleeping market-place.  
The clock struck three, and sweetly, slowly,  
The bells chimed Holy, Holy, Holy . . .  
And then a cock crew, flapping wings,  
And summat made me think of things.

And so, a reborn man, Kane goes forth along the open road ; and, as the sun comes up through the mist with the infinite promise of a new day, the sound of an early plough upon the hillside, and the song of the first lark soaring into the silent heavens, and even the very noise of a railway engine shunting are blended into one glorious symphony of regeneration :

O Christ who holds the open gate,  
O Christ who drives the furrow straight,  
O Christ, the plough, O Christ, the laughter  
Of holy white birds following after,  
Lo, all my heart's field red and torn,  
And Thou wilt bring the young green corn,  
The young green corn divinely springing,  
The young green corn for ever singing ;  
And when the field is fresh and fair  
Thy blessed feet shall glitter there,  
And we will walk the weeded field,  
And tell the golden harvest's yield,  
The corn that makes the holy bread  
By which the soul of man is fed,  
The holy bread, the food unpriced,  
Thy everlasting mercy, Christ.



In *The Widow in the Bye Street*, *Dauber* (1913), and *The Daffodil Fields*, Masfield has, in Spenserian stanzas, written other long narrative poems, which throw the beauty of what might be upon the dark screen of what is. The finest of his later poems is *Reynard the Fox* (1919). This galloping poem, rich in the sights and sounds and scent of the English countryside, describes a day's foxhunting. The first part presents a series of little sketches of the motley crowd attending the hunt, and not since Chaucer's pilgrims set forth upon the shining road to Canterbury have we had in poetry an array of figures so varied, so living, and so thoroughly English. The second part of the poem, which is full of poignant emotion, follows the fluctuating fortunes of the hunt itself, and its freshness and virtue lie in the fact that the chase is described, in the main, not from the hunter's, but from the fox's, point of view.

John Masfield was made Poet Laureate in 1930, on the death of Robert Bridges.

He is also a notable critic (as in *Shakespeare*) ; a memoirist and historian—sinewy, economical, restrained, yet deeply moving (as in *Gallipoli*)—qualities informing his novels too, whether of the sea (*The Bird of Dawning*) or of adventure (*Odtaa: One Damned Thing After Another*) or of English country life (*The Square Peg*).

#### § 4

Masfield's first book appeared in 1902. In the same year was published the earliest volume of Alfred Noyes. He was twenty-two when *The Loom of Years* was issued, and by the time he was thirty, two closely printed volumes of *Collected Poems* stood to his name. The sale of his books in this country, and still more in America, which he many times visited on reading tours, has reached a figure which some popular novelists might envy. Noyes's music is often his own, but spiritually he belongs to the Victorians.

The year 1902 also saw the publication of the earliest book by Walter de la Mare, who was born in 1873. Mr. de la Mare was limited in range, but his poetry, more than any since Coleridge, has the elusive quality of magic, and in the opinion of many critics he is surer of immortality than any other contemporary English poet. Beauty for him was always touched with a wistful sadness :

Very old are we men ;  
Our dreams are tales  
Told in dim Eden  
By Eve's nightingales ;

We wake and whisper awhile,  
 But, the day gone by,  
 Silence and sleep like fields  
 Of Amaranth lie.

When, in 1914, the Great War broke out, there was immediately a boom in poetry. There were approximately two phases of the war (of which there is a well-balanced, lucid, readable account in C. R. M. F. Cruttwell's *A History of the Great War*, published by the Oxford University Press). Firstly, there was the period of crusading faith and high ideals. Then there was the time of weariness and disillusion. The poetry of the war reflected these two phases. Rupert Brooke, with his beautiful form and face, was the radiant embodiment of the first phase. He was born at Rugby, where his father was a schoolmaster, in 1887. After taking his degree at Cambridge, he lived for a time at Grantchester, about which he wrote one of the most delightful of his pre-war poems. He travelled widely, and in 1914 obtained a commission in the Royal Naval Division, with which he served at Antwerp. In 1915 he was sent to the Dardanelles, became ill, and died at Scyros on April 23. Some of his earlier poems like *The Fish* and *Dining-room Tea* would in any case have won him a secure reputation; but his name will always be associated most memorably with the five well-known sonnets written in the first months of the war, and perfectly enshrining the spirit in which the volunteers of 1914 and 1915 entered the trenches:

Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,  
 And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,  
 With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,  
 To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,  
 Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary,  
 Leave the sick hearts that honour could not move,  
 And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary,  
 And all the little emptiness of love!

The chief poets of the second phase were Siegfried Sassoon (b. 1886), who voiced his anger in fierce satire, and Wilfred Owen (1893-1918), whose protest was equally stern but more dignified.

Among the finest flowers of the post-Great War garden are the poems of John Drinkwater (1882-1937), who wrote many beautiful songs about his native Cotswold country, and then turned to a long series of narrative and lyrical poems dealing with human love in all its manifold aspects; he also wrote several very successful historical plays, and a couple of comedies. W. H. Davies, Lascelles Abercrombie, Wilfred Wilson Gibson, Gordon Bottomley, and Harold Monro were all poets with genuine inspiration.



In this brief survey of modern English poetry we have perforce followed only the highways. There are many byways that might profitably be explored if space permitted. Two singers who have enjoyed a well-merited popularity out of all proportion to the slight bulk of their work are A. E. Housman (1865-1936) and Ralph Hodgson (b. 1871). Housman, who was a Professor of Latin at Cambridge, published in 1895 a sheaf of songs called *A Shropshire Lad*, in which beauty and regret were mingled in measures whose rare fascination many have vainly tried to analyse and imitate. After a silence of twenty-seven years, he published *Last Poems*. In 1936, after his death, came *More Poems*. Ralph Hodgson's productiveness has been equally small, but for sheer lyrical ecstasy his *Song of Honour* is unmatched in modern verse. A collected edition of his verse—*Poems*—came out in 1917.

In 1915 James Elroy Flecker died of consumption in Switzerland. He was born in 1884, and having studied Oriental languages at Cambridge, went in 1910 to Constantinople in the Consular Service. The East made a deep impression upon him (witness *The Golden Journey to Samarkand*, a volume of poems that appeared in 1913), and Eastern colour, splendour, and imagery entered largely into his work. This comes out strongly in his drama *Hassan*, and attains perhaps its highest point in the Chorus of Pilgrims with which it concludes :

Sweet to ride forth at evening from the wells,  
Where shadows pass gigantic on the sand,  
When softly through the silence beat the bells  
Along the golden road to Samarkand.

A poet who can write like this has a gift of lyric music which amounts to genius.

Robert Bridges, late Poet Laureate, who was born in 1844, became a doctor in a double sense, being a Doctor of Literature of Oxford and a physician—he was at different times attached to St. Bartholomew's, to the Children's Hospital, and to the Great Northern. His poetry is that of a profound scholar, and is full of interesting experiments in classical metres applied to English verse. His prosody, indeed, is so original that the ordinary reader, who finds himself without a clue, often fails to make it scan. Much of it, on the other hand, especially in *Shorter Poems*, is as simple, sweet, and satisfying as almost anything in verse ; as a lyric poet, indeed, he ranks very high, possessing as he does a remarkably vernal freshness and a subtly pellucid simplicity and spirituality. His greatest work, *The Testament of Beauty*, was published in November 1929. Also he edited one of the finest, the most remarkable anthologies—*The Spirit of Man*. Bridges died in April 1930.

## READING LIST

- FRANCIS THOMPSON : Messrs. Burns, Oates, and Washbourne publish the Complete Works of Francis Thompson in 3 vols. Also the following separately, *The Hound of Heaven*, *St. Ignatius Loyola*, *Shelley : an Essay*. The same firm publish *The Life of Francis Thompson* by Everard Meynell. The Oxford University Press publishes his Poems.
- W. E. HENLEY : his Works (prose as well as verse) are published by Macmillan.
- W. B. YEATS : *Collected Poems* and *Collected Plays* (Macmillan). The publishers also of "A.E." (George W. Russell) and James Stephens.
- LORD DUNSANY ; WILLIAM SHARP : several of the former's, all of the latter's works are published by Heinemann.
- JOHN MASEFIELD : *Collected Poems* (Heinemann, who also publish his novels).
- WALTER DE LA MARE : *Collected Poems*, 2 vols. (Constable). Several separate volumes of De la Mare's Poems are also published by Constable and by Faber & Faber. *Stories, Essays, and Poems* (Everyman's Library).
- RUPERT BROOKE : Brooke's Poems are published by Sidgwick & Jackson.
- JOHN DRINKWATER : John Drinkwater's Poems and Plays are published by Sidgwick & Jackson.
- A. E. HOUSMAN : *Collected Poems* (Cape).
- ROBERT BRIDGES : *The Testament of Beauty* is published by the Oxford University Press, the publishers of all his verse and all his prose.
- WILFRED OWEN : Poems (Chatto & Windus).
- ALFRED NOYES : Various volumes of the poems are published by Blackwood.

The development and the richness of English poetry as a whole (since the Middle Ages) can nowhere be more clearly and attractively seen than in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, edited by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch.

Much of the poetry treated in this chapter belongs to the second decade of the twentieth century ; a general idea of its dominant qualities can be obtained from the *Georgian Books of Verse*, 1911-1922, edited by Sir Edward Marsh and published by the Poetry Bookshop.

The whole period here under consideration is admirably—though perhaps a shade too conventionally—represented in *Poems of To-day*, three series (Sidgwick & Jackson).



GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON was born in Kensington in 1874. His first conspicuous book, his study of Browning, was published in 1904. He then produced several volumes of poems and essays, fantastic romances of which *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (1904) and *The Flying Inn* are the most remarkable, volumes about America and Palestine, literary criticisms of which his *Dickens* is the most important, a remarkable *Short History of England*, and a characteristic study of St. Francis. G. K. Chesterton was intensely English, and his love for England finds fine expression in *The Ballad of the White Horse*.

Chesterton has been called a topsy-turvy philosopher. Certainly he revels in exaggeration and in paradox; certainly he sees only what he intends to see. He made a journey to Palestine, and his description of it is a history of the Crusades. He believes in the tremendous importance of an independent peasantry, and practically all that he saw in Ireland was such a peasantry. Indeed, he himself has said: "I have never managed to lose my old conviction that travel narrows the mind." In his book *Orthodoxy* Chesterton says: "Mere light sophistry is the thing that I happen to despise most of all things, and it is perhaps a wholesome fact that this is the thing of which I am generally accused." This sentence shows that he is aware that a number of his readers and critics have some sort of quarrel with his writings; but does he not mistake that quarrel?

It may be well to consider a few examples of Chesterton's characteristic methods of reasoning, and to ask how far his brilliance in attack leads us on to conviction. In the second chapter of *Orthodoxy* (1909) he enunciates the typical paradox that madness is bred by self-confident rationality. His words are these:

Imagination does not breed insanity. Exactly what does breed insanity is reason. Poets do not go mad; chess-players do. Mathematicians go mad, and cashiers; but creative artists very seldom. I am not, as will be seen, in any sense attacking logic; I only say that the danger does lie in logic, not in imagination. Artistic paternity is as wholesome as physical paternity.

Large propositions of this kind require formal statement and formal support.

Denying them both, Chesterton offers us only a rhetorical expansion of his paradox. Having declared that poets do not go mad, he promptly adduces two who did. But it seems that when poets go mad it is not because they are poetical, but because they have "a weak spot of rationality"! Poe, according to Chesterton, went mad because he was specially analytical, and even preferred draughts to the "romantic knights and castles" of chess. Cowper, we are told, was "definitely driven mad by logic, by the ugly and alien logic of predestination." But was he? Cowper's madness ultimately took the form of religious melancholia, but it began before his conversion to evangelicalism, in a worldly environment in his Temple chambers. As Goldwin Smith carefully points out, the root of Cowper's malady was purely physical; only its development was religious. Then Chesterton makes it a strong point that Cowper is the "*only one great English poet*" who has lost his reason. What is the argumentative value of such a statement? How many poets who can be described as both "English" and "great" have there been? A dozen, twenty? The total is small, and it is at the mercy of the term "great." Yet it must be agreed upon before Chesterton's statement can have any statistical significance whatever.

His love of fairyland and its beautifully fortuitous happenings is delightful. But when he calls these happenings philosophical, and the laws of nature unphilosophical, we know that he ought to have been writing fantastic poetry. He says:

All the terms used in the science books, "law," "necessity," "order," "tendency," and so on, are really unintellectual, because they assume an inner synthesis which we do not possess.

But we do possess a synthesis, which is no more than a consistent putting together of available data. It is from facts and observations thus put together that we deduce law, order, and tendency. The process is highly intellectual, and to dismiss it in favour of the charms and enchantments of fairyland is to play with the reader. Chesterton says:

A forlorn lover might be unable to dissociate the moon from lost love; so the materialist is unable to dissociate the moon from the tide. In both cases there is no connection, except that one has seen them together.

An amazing analogy! Forlorn love has been seen everywhere, even under the lamp-posts of Bloomsbury; but the tide has observed an established relation to the moon. Of course, Chesterton knew this. What he wishes to insinuate is that the mere abstract possibility that a tide shall rise to-morrow to contradict the behaviour of all observed tides is more inspiring to contemplate than any amount of scientific certainty. Prodigious of simile, he continues:



So the materialist professor (though he conceals his tears) is yet a sentimentalist, because, by a dark association of his own, apple-blossoms remind him of apples. But the cool rationalist from fairyland does not see why . . . apple-trees should not grow crimson tulips !

Of what value is this ? Probably Chesterton loved fairy-tales too well to understand their purpose. They were invented to help children to realise life, not to help men to understand it, though they sometimes do both.

It may be said that Chesterton's illustrations are not his argument. The misfortune is that they are often more than half his argument, and that in the rushing and radiant stream of his ideas they are apt to pass as valid when they are not.

He wrote, as it were, in flashes of lightning, but time and reflection are needed to decide how much of his lightning is "fork" and how much is "sheet."

Perhaps the voice of "G. K. C." is in this modern scientific world of ours as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, but none the less it is masculine, insistent, and tuneful. It is all these in his beautiful little poem :

### THE DONKEY

When fishes flew and forests walked,  
And figs grew upon thorn,  
Some moments when the moon was blood,  
Then surely I was born :

With monstrous head and sickening cry,  
And ears like errant wings,  
The devil's walking parody  
On all four-footed things.

The tattered outlaw of the earth,  
Of ancient crooked will ;  
Starve, scourge, deride me ; I am dumb,  
I keep my secret still.

Fools ! For I also had my hour ;  
One far fierce hour and sweet :  
There was a shout about my ears,  
And palms before my feet.

His *Collected Poems* appeared in 1927.

Chesterton died in 1936, while he was still fresh and vigorous in mind and spirit.

## § 2

Hilaire Belloc was the son of a French father. He was born in 1870 and was educated at the Oratory school, Edgbaston, and Balliol College, Oxford. He was born a Roman Catholic. For a short time he was a Liberal Member of Parliament. But the Puritanism of Liberalism antagonised him, and he regarded with apprehension the continual encroachment on individual liberty wrought by modern social legislation. In his book *The Servile State* Hilaire Belloc insists that capitalism, which he disliked, must necessarily be followed by semi-slavery, which he disliked still more. Like Chesterton, he rejects all modern nostrums for social diseases. He denounces both the doctrines of Karl Marx and those of the capitalists. He was convinced that the one hope for the world is a return to the old faith, and that the one power that can conceivably establish genuine internationalism and save mankind from continued war is the Catholic Church. Again, like Chesterton, he was a mediævalist in so far as he believed that the common man in Europe was happier in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries than he has been since. But neither was a mediævalist like Walter Pater or Ruskin, who, to quote Chesterton, "would pay to a church feast every sort of compliment except feasting."

Belloc published his first book, *Verses and Sonnets*, in 1895; an enlarged edition came out in 1924.

The grace of his verse is well illustrated by the following :

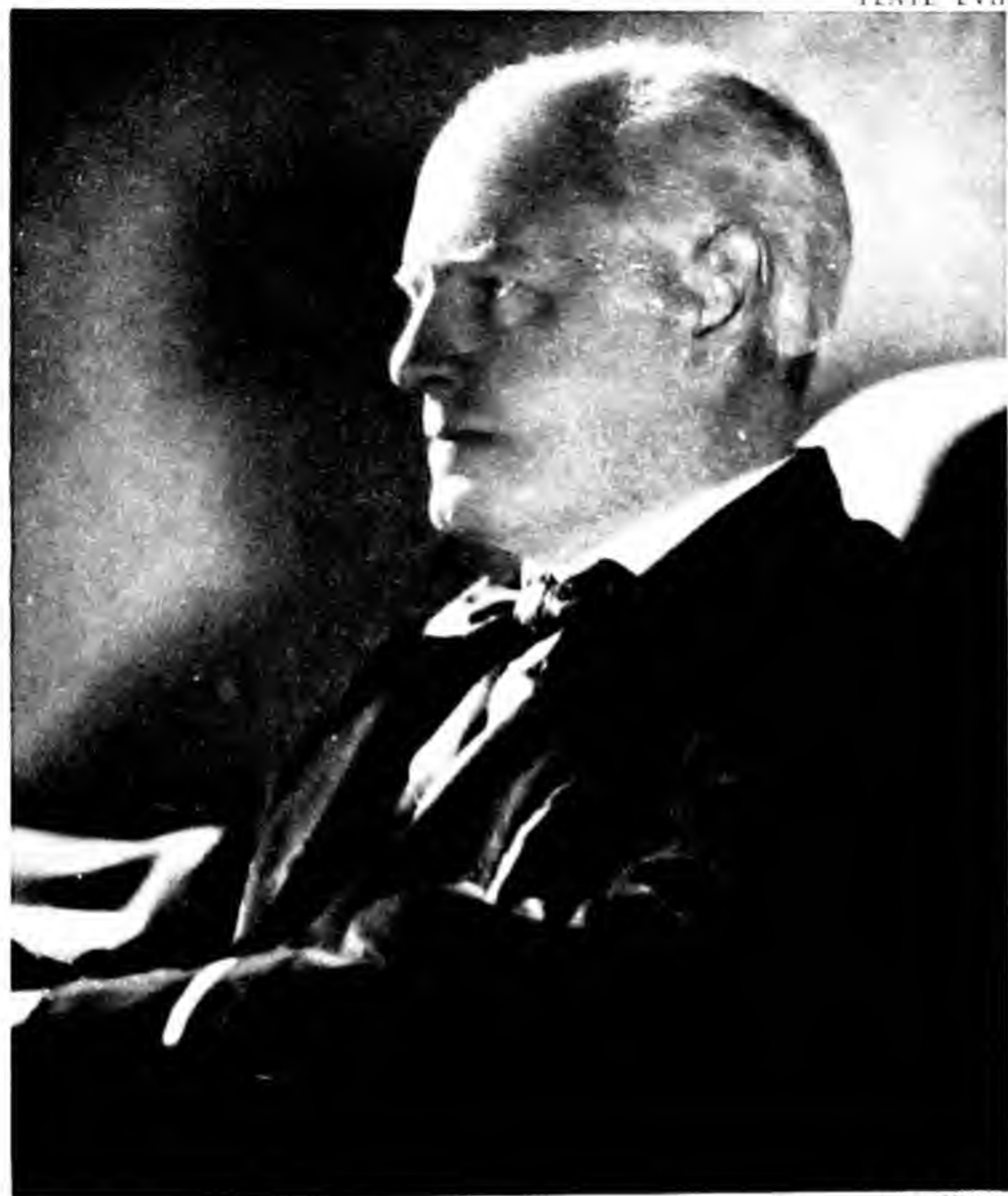
Sally is gone that was so kindly,  
 Sally is gone from Ha'nacker Hill.  
 And the Briar grows ever since then so blindly  
 And ever since then the clapper is still,  
 And the sweeps have fallen from Ha'nacker Mill.

Ha'nacker Hill is in Desolation :  
 Ruin a-top and a field unploughed.  
 And Spirits that call on a fallen nation,  
 Spirits that loved her calling aloud :  
 Spirits abroad in a windy cloud.

Spirits that call and no one answers ;  
 Ha'nacker's down and England's done.  
 Wind and Thistle for pipe and dancers  
 And never a ploughman under the Sun.  
 Never a ploughman. Never a one.

He also has written novels, nonsense stories, admirable travel books, and much acute military criticism.





JOHN GALSWORTHY, O.M.



*T. & R. Annan & Sons*

JOSEPH CONRAD





*Photo: Howard Coster*

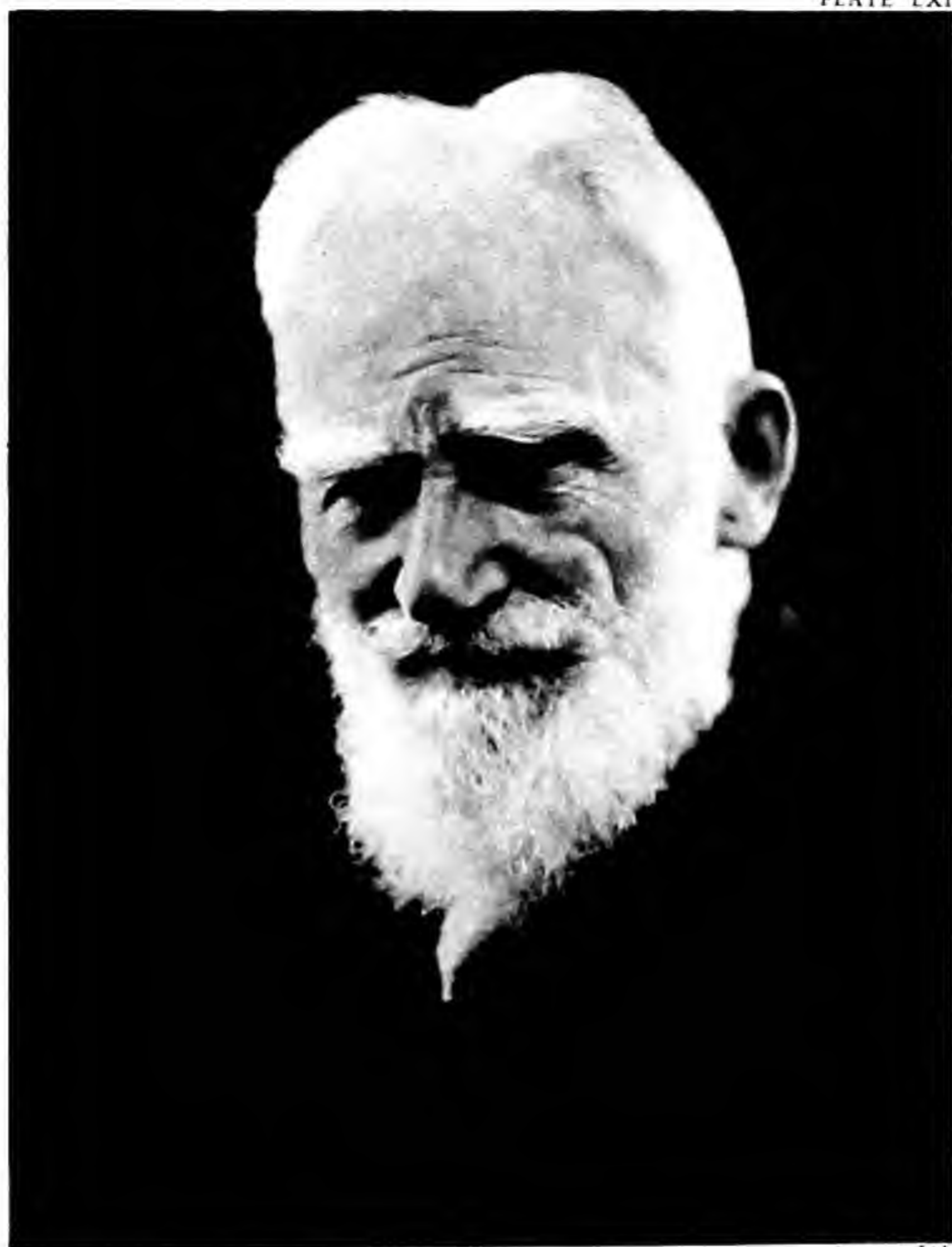
H. G. WELLS



*F. W. Schmidt*

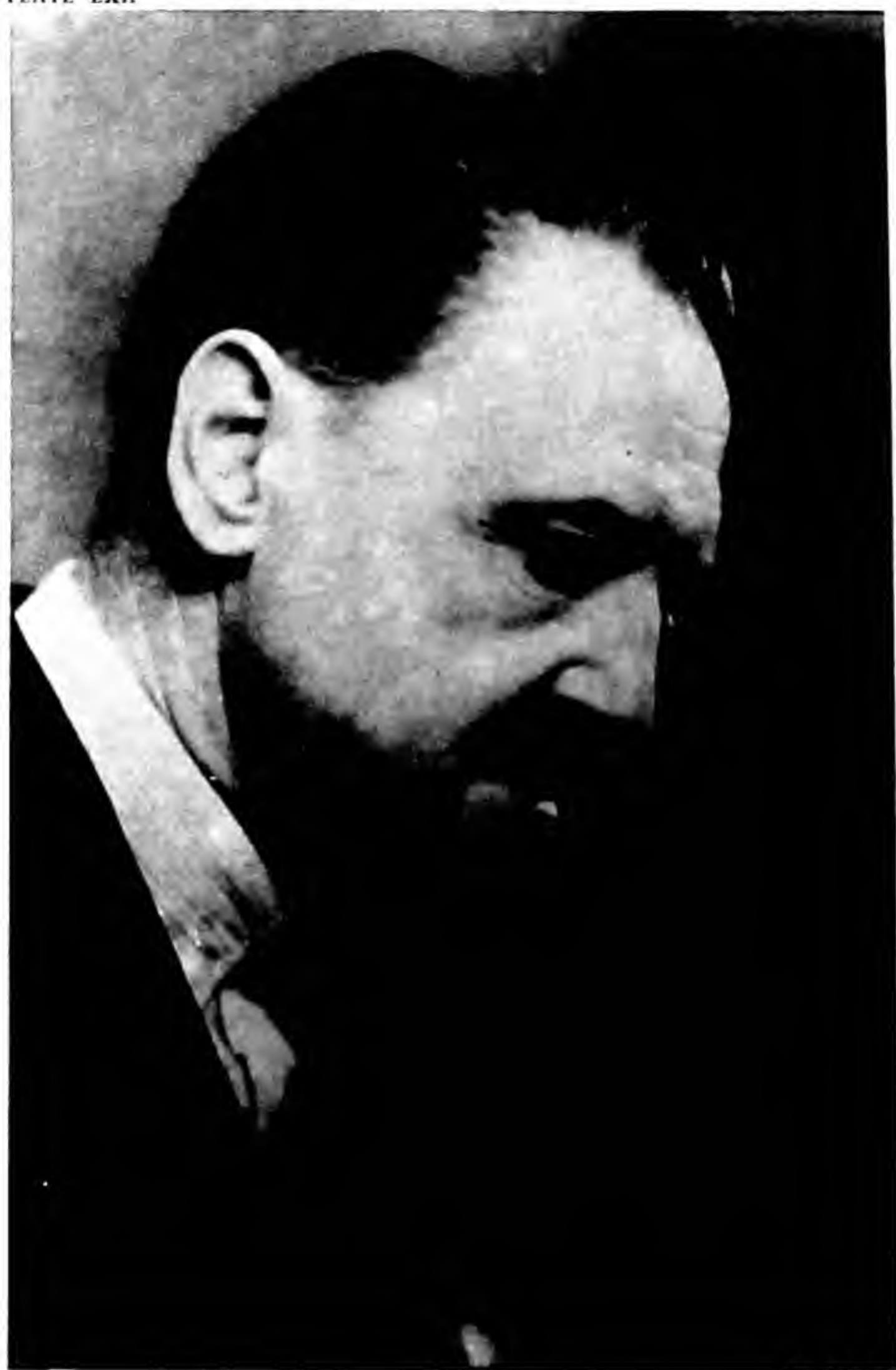
G. K. CHESTERTON





*Bassano Ltd.*

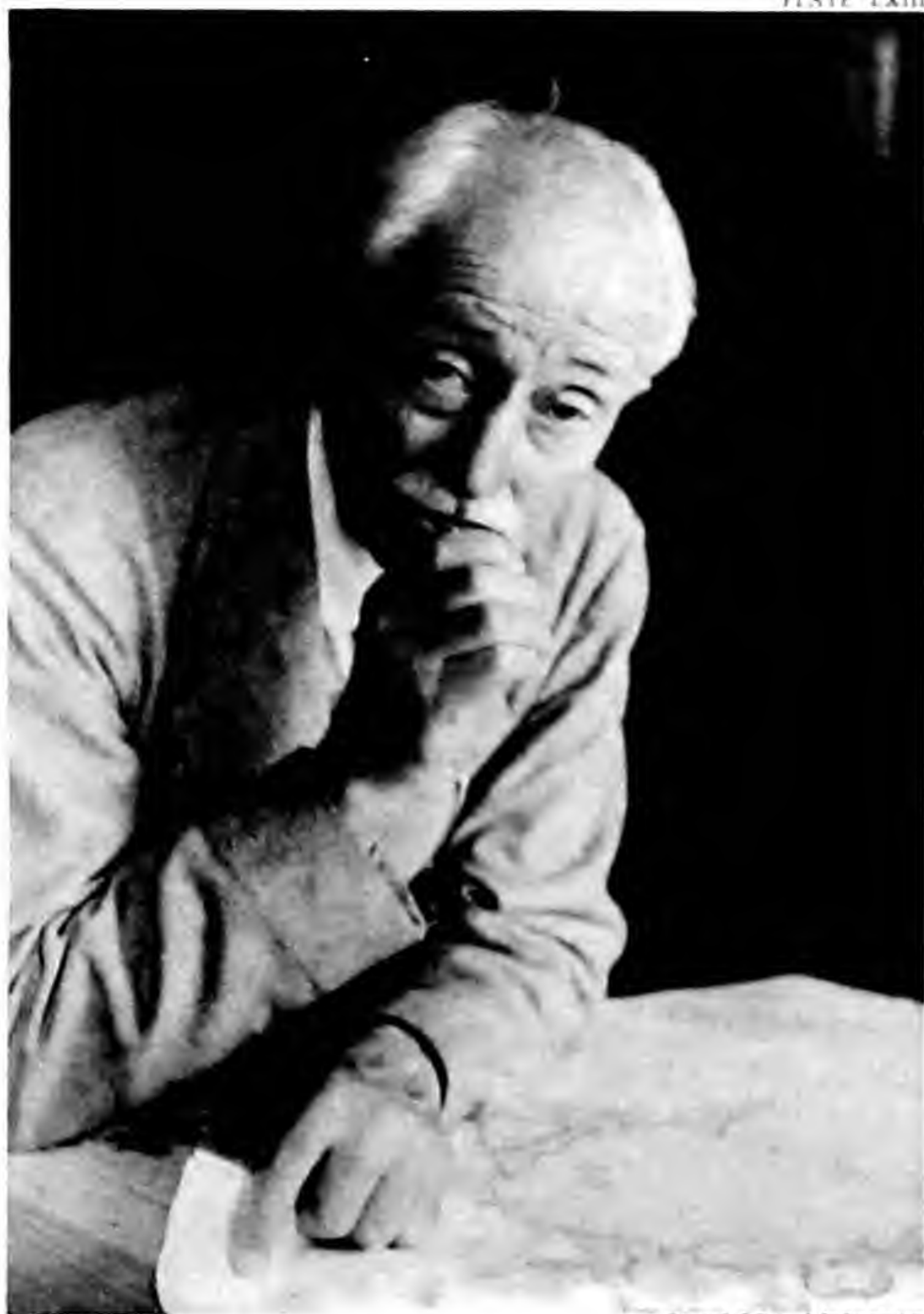
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JOHN MASEFIELD, O.M.



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The list shows a most remarkable versatility and range of talent. Among his serious works of history the biographies of Danton (1899) and of Richelieu (1930) stand out as character-studies amazingly vivid and alive. In fiction his best novel is, beyond doubt, *Emmanuel Burden*, a book full of humour and satire. These are the qualities which distinguish also his various volumes of miscellaneous essays, of which *Caliban's Guide to Letters*, with its ironical advice to authors, is perhaps the most entertaining. But the best of all his writing is to be found in his books of travel, of which *The Path to Rome* (1902), the narrative of a tramp afoot, is as delightful as Stevenson's *Travels with a Donkey*; with that book, indeed, it has much in common—the same happy knack of picture-painting scenes and people, the humour, the gay philosophy of life, together with a rare gift for making the reader feel as if he were his companion in adventure. Hardly less notable is *Hills and the Sea*; stylistically, it is perhaps superior; it is certainly more eloquent.

## § 3

John Galsworthy was born in 1867, was educated at Harrow and Oxford, and was called to the Bar in 1890. He had travelled widely and it was on a sailing-ship voyaging from Adelaide to South Africa in 1894 that he made friends with a sailor called Joseph Conrad, who showed him the manuscript of his first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, and was persuaded by him to send it to a publisher. In appearance and in mind, Mr. Galsworthy was a lawyer. He was cautious, restrained, and dignified. Though he had immense sympathy with suffering and was disturbed by social inequalities, he was always judicial, always calm, examining but not denouncing, eager to understand situations and characters that were most antipathetic to him.

John Galsworthy wrote many novels; three of these, and two long short stories, have been bound into one complete saga of a family. *The Forsyte Saga* is the perfect shining treasure of contemporary fiction. In pure, beautiful unaffected English, Galsworthy gathers into his magic net three generations of a large upper middle-class family during the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the average man believed that property was inviolable, and extended its clutch over the very soul of beauty. The saga ends in these queer upset questioning times, when property is all men's and no men's, and the youngsters, refusing to accept the old intolerant code of respectability and principles, have still not yet formed new and perhaps better laws to replace it; have, indeed, not yet made up their minds whether laws and a code are altogether necessary. The Forsytes, old and young, their business and their loves and their very furniture,



and the subtle effects of one upon the other, are mainly visualised from the point of view of Soames Forsyte, of the second generation. Nobody can touch us to pity like Galsworthy; and the final proof of this is that at the end of the saga we cannot but spare pity for Soames, who in old-fashioned melodrama would have been accompanied by a lurid green limelight to mark him as the villain. And yet no very drastic punishment has been meted out to this dastard, this man of property, except to leave him standing, bewildered and lonely, among the ruins of a shattered tradition. If it be true that universal history can be contained on a small scale, in the true chronicles of one family, then here we have it—incomplete like life itself, for the Forsytes are still going on, outside the book, marrying and breeding and educating their children and adjusting their prejudices.

*The Forsyte Saga* (1906, 1920, 1921) was the great achievement of Galsworthy's literary career; it was continued as the trilogy entitled *The Modern Comedy* (1924–1928). It demonstrates his essential pessimism. He is compassionate and always sympathetic, but he is also almost hopeless. As a writer, never for a moment does he let himself get out of hand. He is always restrained. Yet this very restraint enables him at times vividly to suggest the passion that is affecting his creations. There is a scene in *The Man of Property*, the first part of *The Forsyte Saga*, which illustrates this power. Irene has returned to her husband after having met Bosinney, her lover:

He hardly recognised her. She seemed on fire, so deep and rich the colour of her cheeks, her eyes, and lips, and of the unusual blouse she wore. She was breathing fast and deep, as though she had been running, and with every breath perfume seemed to come from her hair, and from her body, like perfume from an opening flower. . . . He lifted his finger towards her breast, but she dashed his hand aside. "Don't touch me!" she cried. He caught her wrist; she wrenched it away. "And where have you been?" he asked. "In heaven—out of this house!" With those words she fled upstairs.

And Soames stood motionless. What prevented him from following her? Was it that, with the eyes of faith, he saw Bosinney looking down from that high window in Sloane Street, straining his eyes for yet another glimpse of Irene's vanished figure, cooling his flushed face, dreaming of the moment when she flung herself on his breast—the scent of her still in the air around and the sound of her laugh that was like a sob?

The author's sympathies are unquestionably with Irene, but in her world he knows that property is supreme. It tramples on love and overwhelms passion. Irene is forced back to her husband and to the soul-destroying slavery against which she has ineffectively revolted:

Huddled in her grey fur against the sofa-cushions, she had a strange resemblance to a captive owl, bunched in its soft feathers against the wires of a cage. The



supple erectness of her figure was gone, as though she had been broken by cruel exercise ; as though there were no longer any reason for being beautiful, and supple, and erect.

After *The Forsyte Saga*, *Fraternity* (1909) is the greatest of the Galsworthy novels, as *The Apple Tree* is perhaps the loveliest of his excellent short stories. *Fraternity* has something of the hopelessness of Russian fiction. Men are the helpless toys of fate. To quote Galsworthy himself :

Like flies among the impalpable and smoky threads of cobwebs, so men struggle in the webs of their own natures, giving here a start, there a pitiful small jerking, long sustained, and falling into stillness. Enmeshed they were born, enmeshed they die, fighting according to their strength to the end ; to fight in the hope of freedom, their joy ; to die, knowing they are beaten, their reward.

In addition to his novels, John Galsworthy wrote many short stories (for instance, in *Caravan*) and plays. The plays are well constructed and eminentlyactable, and are always concerned with some social or moral problem. In *Strife* (1909), Galsworthy is concerned with the struggle between employer and employed ; in *Justice* (1910), he indicts the law's method of dealing with the more pitiful type of criminal ; in *The Silver Box* (1906) and *The Eldest Son*, the theme is that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor ; *Loyalties* (1922) explains itself ; and so on. Always he feels the cruelty of life. He diagnoses, but he suggests no remedies. Always he is sedate, calm, judicial, well-bred, a great literary artist, but extraordinarily true to his class—the English upper middle-class, the class of the lawyers and the doctors and the professors.

John Galsworthy died in 1933.

#### § 4

There could be no greater contrast than that which exists between John Galsworthy and H. G. Wells. In most of the great controversies of our times the two men were on the same side, but while Galsworthy always struggles to see his opponent's point of view, and insists that he shall be treated courteously and justly, H. G. Wells, as has been well said, "has no other idea but to hit the enemy over the head with a club." Temperamentally H. G. Wells (born in 1866) was a tempestuous fighter.

H. G. Wells's writings fall into well-defined classes. He began with a series of highly imaginative romances in which he made use of "the teeming suggestions of modern science." *The Time Machine* (his first book, 1895), *The Wonderful Visit*, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, *The Wheels of Chance*, *The Invisible Man*, *The War of the Worlds*, *When the Sleeper Awakes*,

*The First Men in the Moon*, and *The Food of the Gods* were all written in the first ten years of his literary life, to be followed later by *The War in the Air* and *The War that will End War*. The early scientific stories preceded the first of his romantic stories, *Love and Mr. Lewisham*, which was published in 1900. *Kipps* was published in 1905. *Tono Bungay* in 1909, and *Mr. Polly* in 1910. His reputation as a novelist depended mainly on these four books, and to a lesser degree on *Ann Veronica*, *The New Machiavelli*, and *Marriage*, and it is interesting to note that five of the seven novels were published between 1908 and 1912, which, regarding Wells as a literary artist, was certainly the most successful period of his life. His two other pre-war romances, *The Passionate Friends* and *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harmon*, are less significant.

Henry James described *Kipps* as "the first intelligently and consistently ironic or satiric novel." Incidentally both it and *Love and Mr. Lewisham* are criticisms of the social arrangements and conventions that entail waste of opportunity and loss of happiness. Mr. Lewisham is an ill-paid schoolmaster, Kipps is a draper's assistant. Many of the incidents in both novels are autobiographical, and both of them are chapters in the tragedy of waste. "I was thinking," Kipps says, "jest what a rum go everything is." It is clear that Wells wants to convince us that everything need not and ought not to be a rum go.

*Tono Bungay* is the masterful epic of modern quackery. Wells has said that his intention was "to give a view of the whole strange advertising civilisation of which London is the centre." The first two-thirds of the novel are vastly superior to the last third, but in its analysis of the leisured, rather futile life of country houses, the sordid piety of the struggling tradesman, the flamboyant adventures of the advertising quack, it is a great achievement, certainly one of the most important half-dozen novels that have been written since the beginning of this century. Wells has nothing but scorn for the society that permits great fortunes to be made by quackery, but it is not only in questions of commerce and finance that the world has gone astray. "Love, like everything else in this immense process of social disorganisation in which we live, is a thing adrift, a fruitless thing broken away from its connection."

*Ann Veronica* is the story of the rebelling daughter, told with many scenes of extremely robust passion. *The New Machiavelli* is largely concerned with politics and is also a courageous study of the tremendous power of sexual love.

Many competent critics agree that *The History of Mr. Polly*, slight as it is, is H. G. Wells's masterpiece. Mr. Polly was born with the soul of an artist, but fate compelled him to be an unsuccessful hosier in a small seaside town, to be married to a stupid, incapable wife, and to be a martyr



to indigestion as the result of her bad cooking. Despite the hosier's shop, despite his wife, and despite his indigestion, Mr. Polly firmly believed that "somewhere—magically inaccessible perhaps but still somewhere—were pure, easy, and joyous states of body and mind," and at last Mr. Polly magnificently revolted, finding, after many adventures, peace and health for himself, and leaving his wife no worse off and no more unhappy than she was when he was with her. There is a sustained humour in *The History of Mr. Polly* not to be found in any other of the Wells novels. The characters are Dickensian, though the philosophy is Wells's own.

Wells was a writer of enormous energy and industry, and in the years when he was most prolific as a journalist he worked out his social philosophy in a series of books of which *Anticipations*, published in 1901, was the first. Before 1914 he was already dreaming of a world-state which would make wars impossible and would ensure a measure of happiness for the least gifted of its citizens.

In 1916 he published *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, in which he records the fears and feelings of the liberal-minded English middle class during the Great War; Mr. Britling in his essentials is Wells himself. It was followed by *The Soul of a Bishop* and *Joan and Peter*, in a sense the intellectual and spiritual sequels of *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, and the new faith evident in these novels is elaborated in *God the Invisible King*.

Wells's most important achievement in the years since 1918 is without question *The Outline of History* (1920), one of the most important characteristics of which is the constant emphasis of the links that have always existed between the various peoples of the earth. *The Outline of History* was written as a step towards bringing about the future world-state with which Wells was obsessed. And he did not dream quite without faith. "Brotherhood through sorrow," he declares, "sorrow for common sufferings and for irreparable mutual injuries, is spreading and increasing throughout the world."

H. G. Wells could have been, was indeed, a master of literature; but for a while, in his novels, though not in his histories, he sacrificed style, lucidity, his ideals of an artistic perfection, and the sunset-and-evening-star aftermath that such striving must bring, to stumble after a sterner and more impersonal call. Unheeding the advice, "To thine own self be true," he was working out the creed: "Never mind about being true to oneself. What does it matter whether you are a great artist or not. Somebody somewhere is not being fairly treated. See to it."

Wells died in 1946. Towards the end of his life he seemed to waver between his early faith in mankind's powers of saving itself, and pessimism. He saw it as a race between education and chaos inevitably leading to further world war. *The Fate of Homo Sapiens* stated the problem anew. *The*



*Bulphington of Blup* castigated the impractical idealists. *The Anatomy of Frustration* analysed that element in human life and thought. One of his great projects in the later years was a *World Brain*, an encyclopædia of established and accepted knowledge. If he died a rather saddened prophet, it was with gleams of hope that the plea he had always made for an ordered society might yet prevail.

## § 5

Arnold Bennett was born in 1867. He was employed for a short time in a lawyer's office, which he abandoned for journalism. He lived for a while in Paris, and French influence is very evident in his art. His first novel was published in 1898. Arnold Bennett was born in the Potteries; again and again he uses them as a setting for his novels, until we feel we know the exact hours of the train service between Hanbridge and Bursley. *Clayhanger* (1910), *Hilda Lessways* (1911), *These Twain* (1916), *Anna of the Five Towns*, and the delicious biography of ironic humour *The Card* all belong to the Five Towns series, as does that undoubted masterpiece *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908), the life-story of the two daughters of a draper in the latter half of the Victorian era. One sister, Sophia, the bold adventurer, eloped to Paris and lived there throughout the siege. The other, Constance, lived on in the Five Towns, absorbed in a monotonous humdrum existence of which every detail is made enthralling by the novelist's genius.

In his later years, Arnold Bennett constantly displayed the fresh wonder of a child on being first confronted with the marvels of luxurious civilisation. He revelled in describing success. The great hotel and the fashionable restaurant were a constant joy to him. He was a fine literary craftsman, and he prided himself on the fact that his attitude towards the author's profession was entirely neat and businesslike. He is always interesting and nearly always extremely amusing, and his naïve sense of wonder plays Jekyll to Hyde, his other self, the sophisticated man of the world. The most notable novel in what may be called the success-loving period is *Mr. Prohack*, a comedy of unflagging vitality and consummate craftsmanship. In his *Riceyman Steps* (1924) Bennett returned to his interest in the unsuccessful and in the workaday world. This study of a miserly Clerkenwell second-hand book seller is as fine a thing as Bennett ever did. It evidences acute observation and an equally acute appreciation of character and of motives. His descriptions have a minuteness which for all its detail is always interesting.

Arnold Bennett published over sixty volumes, which include in addition to the Five Towns novels, sensational romances, of which *The Grand*



*Babylon Hotel* (1902) and *Buried Alive* are the best known, *Essays*, collections of short stories, and books of criticism and travel. He is also the author of a few plays, of which *Milestones* (1912), written in collaboration with E. Knoblock, and *The Great Adventure* (1913) have been the most successful. He died in 1931 : an adventure he did not expect so soon to encounter.

## § 6

Joseph Conrad, whose full name was Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski, was born in Poland in 1856, and he died in 1924. His father was a notable Polish patriot and scholar and a translator of Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, and Alfred Vigny into Polish. In his early manhood Conrad went to Constantinople with the intention of joining the Russians in the war against the Turks, but though born in a country with no coast he felt the call of the sea and joined the French mercantile marine. After sailing for some time in French ships, he came to Lowestoft, learned English, and obtained a mate's certificate from the Board of Trade. In his *Youth and Other Tales* published in 1902 he has described his maiden voyage as an officer on an English ship. It was at Marseilles that he first boarded a vessel flying the Red Ensign, and was for the first time addressed in the English language. He had gone out with a French pilot to "a big high-class cargo steamer."

A few strokes brought us alongside, and it was then that, for the very first time in my life, I heard myself addressed in English—the speech of my secret choice, of my future, of long friendships, of the deepest affections of hours of toil and hours of ease, and of solitary hours too, of books read, of thoughts pursued, of remembered emotions—of my very dreams ! And if (after thus fashioned by it in that part of me which cannot decay) I dare not claim it aloud as my own then, at any rate, the speech of my children. Thus small events grow memorable by the passage of time. As to the quality of the address itself I cannot say it was very striking. Too short for eloquence and devoid of all charm of tone, it consisted precisely of the three words, "Look out there," growled out huskily above my head.

The characteristics of Conrad's art are the reflection of the incidents of his career. He has denied the story that knowing three or four languages he deliberately chose to write in English. He says : "English was for me neither a matter of choice nor adoption. The merest idea of choice had never entered my head. And as to adoption—well, yes, there was adoption ; but it was I who was adopted by the genius of the language, which directly I came out of the stammering stage made me its own so completely that its very idioms, I truly believe, had a direct action on my temperament

and fashioned my still plastic character." This strange affinity for a foreign language does not make it a less stupendous fact that a Pole who could hardly speak English at twenty, has learned to write books in supple and masterly English without any betrayal that it is not his native tongue. The greatness of his achievement makes Conrad a man apart. He is with us but not of us. During the twenty years that he sailed the seas he never once met a Polish sailor, yet for all his seamanship and for all his mastery of English he is still a Pole. In temperament, definitely Slavonic, as a novelist the disciple of the great Russians, being himself a man apart, Conrad was always impressed by the isolated and lonely. In one of his books he writes of "the indestructible loneliness that surrounds, envelops, clothes every human soul from the cradle to the grave, and, perhaps, beyond."

His first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, written while he was still a sailor, was published in 1895. This was followed by *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896), *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897), and *Lord Jim* (1900). Conrad's genius was recognised at once by W. E. Henley, that prince of critics, and while he had to wait some years for any great popularity he attracted from the beginning the critical and discriminating reader. *Typhoon*, the best of all his tales—the best tale of the sea in the English language—came out in 1903. *Nostromo*, one of the finest of his stories, was published in 1904, *The Secret Agent*, an amazingly ingenious detective story, in 1907, *Chance* in 1914, *Within the Tides* in 1915, *Victory* in 1915, *The Shadow-Line* in 1917, *The Arrow of Gold* in 1919, and *Rescue* in 1920. Conrad also published a fragmentary autobiography which he called *A Personal Record*, a volume of essays called *Notes on Life and Letters*, and that admirable book, *The Mirror of the Sea*.

As has already been suggested, the central figure of nearly all the Conrad stories is a man apart; in *Almayer's Folly* a white man living among brown men; in *An Outcast of the Islands* a white man cut off from his fellows through his infatuation for a coloured woman; in *The Secret Agent* a man isolated by his profession; and so on.

While he was a sailor, Conrad made many voyages to the East, and the sea and the East play large parts in his dramas. No novelist has ever described with such overwhelming and yet restrained power tropical storms and hot seas and writhing luxurious scented vegetation as cruel as it is beautiful. It may almost be said that the sea and the sun are often the principal characters of his stories.

As a stylist Joseph Conrad is at least remotely akin to Henry James, and his curious preference for a narrative form in which one man tells the tale of a man who tells the tale to another who relates the conversation of two men about the hero is sometimes a little trying and bewildering.



## § 7

George Moore was born in County Mayo, Ireland, in 1852. He studied art in London and Paris, turning to literature when after many months of hard work he discovered that painting was not his vocation. In Paris he became intimate with the great impressionist painters Monet, Manet, and Degas, and came under the literary influence of Emile Zola. George Moore's early novels, *A Modern Lover*, 1883, *A Mummer's Wife*, 1884, and *A Drama in Muslin*, 1886, are definitely Zolaesque in their character; they owe something also to the realism of Balzac, whom he admired not this side idolatry. Before the appearance of these novels he had published two books of poems—*Flowers of Passion*, 1877, and *Pagan Poems*, 1881, whose titles suggest their quality.

Of his early novels *A Mummer's Wife* is the best. It is concerned with the sordid unmoral life of a number of second-rate players, but though at the time of its publication it was banned by the libraries, the novel itself can certainly not be called immoral, and its "daring" is far less than that of many of the novels of to-day. George Moore arrived as a novelist with the publication of *Esther Waters*, a fine, sympathetic, and most human story, in 1894. By this time he had sloughed a good deal of the Zola influence. In *Esther Waters* there is no unnecessary insistence on the unpleasant. It is one of the few English novels that has a servant-girl for a heroine, and the story is told straightforwardly and faithfully, no essentials being omitted and no unessentials related. *Esther Waters*, as Moore presents her, is a splendid woman. Undaunted by misfortune, unconquered by circumstance, she remains always the mistress of her fate.

Moore was never modest in appraising his own work, and of *Esther Waters* he has said: "I sat wondering how it could have happened to me to write the book that among all books I should have cared most to write, and to have written it so much better than I ever dreamed it could be written."

*Evelyn Innes*, published in 1898, has been well described by John Freeman as a novel of intellectual sensualism.

The beginning of the Irish literary movement and Irish sympathy with the Boers sent George Moore back to Ireland for a ten years' residence, during which he wrote his remarkable novel *The Lake*, the story of an Irish priest and a village schoolmistress. In this book the realist has become almost a symbolist. "There is a lake in every man's heart, and he listens to its monotonous whisper year after year, more and more attentive till at last he ungirds."

In his later years Moore's most considerable achievement was *The Brook*



*Kerith*, in which with characteristic audacity and literary skill he reconstructs the story of the Resurrection. He was always fond of writing about himself and his adventures. *The Confessions of a Young Man* was published in 1888 and *Memoirs of my Dead Life* in 1906. It was these two books which caused Miss Susan Mitchell to write: "Some men kiss and tell, some men kiss and never tell, George Moore tells but never kisses." The elaborate *Hail and Farewell* published in three volumes in 1911, 1912, and 1914 is an intensely interesting intellectual biography unique in our times and in some respects to be compared to Rousseau's *Confessions*. George Moore also wrote several plays and a volume of art criticism, *Modern Painting*, published in 1893.

He died in 1933.

## § 8

It is remarkable that three of Scotland's greatest men of letters, Burns, Carlyle, and Barrie, were all born in peasants' cots. The cottage in which, in the year 1860, James Matthew Barrie saw the light, stood in the little village of Kirriemuir, which he was afterwards to make immortal under the name of Thrums. He learnt his first lessons at Dumfries School, and continued his studies at Edinburgh University, where he took the degree of Master of Arts. Doctor Johnson remarked that in the eyes of a Scot the finest view in his native country is the high-road to England. Barrie, at any rate, took that road, and obtaining a post on a Nottingham newspaper, began that career as a writer to which his whole nature irresistibly called him. There he earned three guineas a week as a political leader-writer and also, it is said, contributed words of wisdom under the motto, "Now step I forth to whip Hypocrisy." He has sketched his own portrait at that age as a shy, awkward, and melancholy youth, given much to books and solitude, who might be seen at night mooning under the walls of the Castle with his thoughts "three hundred miles due north." But he was bent on London. Some of his articles had been accepted by the *St. James's Gazette*, and he wrote to the editor, James Greenwood, to ask his advice. "For God's sake, don't come!" was the reply. Barrie's response was to move straight to London, where he settled down for three years as a freelance. Then came a real struggle for life. He has himself recorded the merits of a penny bun as a dinner, when expanded internally by a cup of coffee. But his articles, especially those in *The British Weekly* under the name of Gavin Ogilvy, began to attract notice. Republished in the volumes *My Lady Nicotine* and *When a Man's Single*, in *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888) and in *A Window in Thrums* (1880), he showed that a new writer had arisen with a gift of genius all his own. *The Little Minister*, which



followed, is really one of the idylls on a larger scale. With the *Little White Bird*, a story for children, and about them, but the delight of child-lovers of all ages—as *Peter Pan* was later—the new planet which had swum into the world's ken was rounded and complete.

Now, what was the nature of this new gift of genius? It had three sides to it. First, a power of drawing real-life characters, especially those of a Scottish village, the peasants, the shopkeepers, and the elders, with such vividness that the reader seems to live among them. Secondly, a love of children, and an understanding of them, only possible to one who had kept "a young lamb's heart among the full-grown flocks." Thirdly, the different, and indeed opposite, faculty of bringing into being creatures, such as Babbie, Lob, and Mary Rose, who seem to have strayed in from fairyland. But all his characters, whether of real life or fancy, are touched with a peculiar kind of loving humour which can hardly be defined; it is unlike that of any other writer, and indeed has become familiarly known as "Barrieism." It seldom comes from the mouth of a humorist uttering a joke, but often from the lips of a child or of a solemn person saying something unexpectedly funny without intending it. When Maggie Shand tells John that she is afraid that after they are married he may grow tired of her and cast eyes on other women, a thing which she has read of as having been known to happen, and John replies with intense solemnity, "Not in Scotland, Maggie, not in Scotland"—that is a Barrieism. When the little boy in *A Kiss for Cinderella* is having his supper in his cot and is told that if he eats so much jam he will be sick to-morrow, and he springs up, crying in exultation, "I shall be sick to-night!"—that is a Barrieism.

The nature of Barrie's signal qualities, therefore, may be expressed as an intimate association of humour and sentiment—humour that is simple and direct, yet often subtle and suggestive—both humour and sentiment the offspring of an ingenious intellect and a cunning whimsical imagination.

The books that exhibit Barrie at his fullest power are perhaps *Sentimental Tommy*, which has Thrums for a background, and its sequel *Tommy and Grizel*. As studies of child-life they are not only amazingly fine, but such as could have issued from no other mind. Tommy, grown up, is also a marvellous picture of the soul of a poser and philanderer, a youth who loved make-believe until a great passion could not thrill his blood. Grizel, the girl with the crooked smile and the straight soul, knew that he was for evermore a boy, "and boys cannot love. Oh, is it not cruel to ask a boy to love?" Grizel is perhaps Barrie's finest character.

Barrie as a playwright has been referred to in another chapter, but here we might say that when he broke into the theatre with the long list of plays, from *Walker, London*, down to *Mary Rose*, he did so without the slightest



knowledge of the technique of the stage, and with no inkling, apparently, that such a thing existed. His plays broke, systematically, every law held sacred by the critics. But the spectators laughed and shook, or in turn were touched to tears. The wizard had waved his wand and they were mesmerised.

## § 9

W. W. Jacobs (1863-1943), with his studies of riverside characters and the skippers of coasting boats, has carried on the Dickens tradition and has shown something of the master's appreciation of the humour of simple men and simple life. W. W. Jacobs has created types whom it is not easy to forget, and his fun is always natural, unforced, and delightful. It is a remarkable, but perfectly intelligible, fact that Jacobs has been able to draw continuously on the experience and impressions of his early life in Erith. His work is the cocoon of that and of little else.

Israel Zangwill (1864-1926) was notable mainly for the intimate pictures of Jewish life in his earlier novels. Maurice Hewlett (1861-1923), a writer of versatile power and many moods, will perhaps be longest remembered for the charming fancy of *The Forest Lovers* (1898). *Richard Yea-and-Nay* (1900) and other vivid, stirring, romantic novels, mostly of the Middle Ages and sixteenth century, some splendid stories (*Little Novels of Italy*), several novels of modern English country life, and a memorable narrative poem, *The Plow* (1916): these, like his *Letters* (1926), leave one with an ineradicable impression of stylistic and moral integrity, a sensitive eye for historicity, a warm heart and understanding, and a remarkable gift of story-telling.

Mrs. Humphry Ward (1851-1920) was one of the most important and most interesting of the great army of women novelists. She was the grand-daughter of Arnold, the famous headmaster of Rugby, and the niece of Matthew Arnold. She inherited a "cultured moral austerity" which found its expression in the novels which she began to write at the beginning of the period with which we are dealing. Mrs. Ward lived at Oxford at a time when religious liberalism had supplanted the Catholic fervour of the tractarians. She was the apologist of "honest doubt," and her *Robert Elsmere* (1888), a novel with a purpose if ever one was written, which owed much of its success to the appreciation of William Ewart Gladstone, is a defence of the doubter and the suggestion that ethical theism is to be preferred to orthodox faith. In her later novels Mrs. Ward to some extent modified her position, but her importance in literary history is due to the fact that she deliberately used fiction as a means of discussing religious problems, just as Mr. Wells has used it more recently.



Lewis Carroll (1832-1898) was the most gifted of the Victorian writers for children, and for his incomparable *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass* generations of boys and girls will call him blessed. They are unrivalled in their whimsical fancy and their delicious humour. Lewis Carroll was the pen-name of Charles Dodgson, an Oxford mathematical tutor who was also the author of volumes dealing with geometry and trigonometry of which he is said to have been far prouder than of the Alice books. Happily, Dodgson loved children : and Alice was the result of his love.

The modern popularity of the novel induces most professional writers to adopt that form of literary expression, and the essayist is comparatively inconspicuous in the story of modern English literature. Among modern English essayists, E. V. Lucas (1868-1938) has perhaps the most firmly established reputation. We have heard him described as "a pleasant cultured trifler." This is a mere half-truth. Lucas was never, and never tried to be, profound. Yet he can touch more chords than is generally supposed. His literary criticism is that of tasting and appreciation ; his outlook on life is never wide, but it is always original and genuine. He is an essayist in things as they happen and in people who flit by. He observes and savours, and does both within the control of an inborn critical faculty and a fine tact. It has been well said that a good critic is a critic of everything, and E. V. Lucas is a genial critic of everything that he met, or that he sought, in life. He wrote an excellent biography of Charles Lamb, and as an essayist he has many of Lamb's qualities. The following short passage from an essay on the Zoo is characteristic :

And so I came away, having seen everything in the Zoo except the most advertised animal of all—the pickpocket. To see so many visitors to the cages wearing a patronising air, and to hear their remarks of condescension or dislike, as animal after animal is passed under review, has a certain piquancy in the contiguity of this ever-present notice, "Beware of Pickpockets," warning man against—what?—man. Lions, at any rate, one feels (desirable as it may be to capture their skins for hearthrugs), pick no pockets.

During the post-Victorian period there were a considerable number of talented English novelists concerned to tell stories and comparatively uninterested in philosophy, form, or the interpretation of life : among the more distinguished of them were A. F. Anstey, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir H. Rider Haggard, Stanley Weyman, Anthony Hope, Oliver Onions, E. F. Benson, R. H. Benson, and Henry Seton Merriman. To these must be added Miss May Sinclair and Eden Phillpotts, who, however, are concerned with deeper things. Miss May Sinclair was without question one of the most gifted of the latter-day women writers whose reputations are well established. As a stylist she challenges comparison with Conrad.

Notable novels of hers are *The Divine Fire* (1904), *The Three Sisters* (1914), *Mary Olivier* (1919). Her short stories are very good; her poetry and literary criticism, original and distinctive. Eden Phillpotts excelled in the rural novel, with its comedies and its tragedies, and he put its comedy into a number of very successful plays. English country life figures prominently also in the novels of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, who, after many years of novel-writing, turned to literary criticism and to the editing of the best anthologies published in the twentieth century. Sir Arthur, moreover, was a notable poet.

## READING LIST

### G. K. CHESTERTON :

*A Short History of England* (Chatto & Windus), *Poems* (Burns, Oates, & Washbourne), *All Things Considered* and *Tremendous Trifles* (both Methuen), *The Man Who Was Thursday* (Arrowsmith), *Browning* (Macmillan), *Flying Inn* (Methuen), *St. Francis d'Assisi* (Hodder & Stoughton), *Wisdom of Father Brown* (Cassell), *Autobiography* (Hutchinson), *Stories, Essays, and Poems* (Everyman's Library).

### HILAIRE BELLOC :

*Marie Antoinette* (Methuen), *The Path to Rome* (Nelson), *Hills and the Sea* (Methuen), *On Everything* and *On Something* (both Methuen). *Emmanuel Burden* and *A Change in the Cabinet* (both Methuen), *French Revolution* (T. Butterworth), *Hills and the Sea* (Methuen), *James II* (Faber & Faber), *Short Talks With The Dead* (Cape), *Sonnets and Verse* (Duckworth), *Stories, Essays, and Poems* (Everyman's Library).

### JOHN GALSWORTHY :

Heinemann publish all Galsworthy's Novels, including the omnibus volumes of *The Forsyte Saga*, *The Modern Comedy*, and *Short Stories*. John Galsworthy's Plays are published by Duckworth.

*Life and Letters*, by H. V. Marrot, is the official biography. Hermon Ould, who knew Galsworthy well, has written a study of his dramatic phases (Chapman & Hall).

Sheila Kaye-Smith's *John Galsworthy* (Nisbet).

### H. G. WELLS :

*The Outline of History* (Cassell), *Tono Bungay* (Macmillan), *Joan and Peter*, *Kipps*, *Mr. Polly*, *Mr. Blettsworthy on Rampole Island*, *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* (all Collins), *The Autocracy of Mr. Parham* (Heinemann), *Experiment in Autobiography* (Gollancz).

Wells is now published in many popular editions and reprints.



ARNOLD BENNETT :

*The Old Wives' Tale* (Everyman's Library).

Messrs. Methuen publish many of Arnold Bennett's novels, including  
*Clayhanger*, *Hilda Lessways*, etc.

*The Great Adventure* (Methuen).

*Books and Persons* (Chatto & Windus).

JOSEPH CONRAD :

Dent publish a uniform edition of Joseph Conrad's works ; some of these can be obtained also in cheap editions, published by Dent and Methuen.

GEORGE MOORE :

Most of the works of George Moore are published by Heinemann.

The same firm publish his *Hail and Farewell*, an *Autobiography* in 3 volumes.

J. M. BARRIE :

Sir J. M. Barrie's works are nearly all published by Hodder & Stoughton.

MRS. HUMPHRY WARD :

Many of her novels are published by John Murray.

MAURICE HEWLETT :

Macmillan ; Methuen.

LEWIS CARROLL :

His various books are published by Macmillan, but *Alice* now has many publishers and illustrated editions.

E. V. LUCAS :

Published by Methuen.

A. QUILLER-COUCH :

Novels (Dent).

For the development of English prose, see that illuminating anthology, *The Oxford Book of English Prose*, edited by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (Oxford University Press). To be read also is Harold Williams, *Modern English Literature* (Sidgwick & Jackson).

## XL

### LITERATURE BETWEEN THE WARS

#### § 1

THE history of literary activity between 1914 and 1939 is largely a history of the novel. And there is nothing surprising about that. The period was one of chaos: economic, moral, and intellectual. Consequently the material with which the writer had to deal was so complicated that to give it literary shape he needed a form that would be capable of registering all kinds of ideas and experiences. Now the novel could do this. Consider one of the best-known definitions, that formulated by the French critic, Abel Chevalley, and later endorsed by E. M. Forster: "A fiction in prose of a certain extent." What could be looser? So the novel became a sort of hold-all and usurped the place once held by tighter mediums of expression: the drama, the essay, the long poem. The writer was emboldened in his choice by the knowledge that rising standards of education had created a new public which might jib at literature offered neat, but could be induced to swallow it in the guise of fiction. Perhaps, too, the novel appealed because of all forms of expression it seemed to be the least subject to rules and restrictions; and this was an age in revolt against discipline. (We shall see later how dislike of discipline led to a retrogressive movement in poetry.)

One result of the intensive cultivation of the novel was an enrichment of its subject-matter. Another and less obvious result was an enrichment of the novelist's technical resources. He learned new tricks, partly because there had to be a technical advance if the novel-form was to cope with the extra strain put upon it, and partly because the self-questioning spirit of the age led to experimentation as an end in itself. Dickens never bothered to inquire whether the traditional way of writing a novel was necessarily the best; but the modern novelist, his head buzzing with new concepts of space and time, is prone to muse after the fashion of Edouard in André Gide's *The Counterfeiters* (1925): "My novel hasn't got a subject . . . 'slice of life,' the naturalistic school used to say. The great defect of that school is that it always cuts its slice in the same direction; in time, length-wise. Why not in breadth? or in depth? As for me I should not like to cut it at all. Police notwithstanding, I should like to put everything in my novel."



## § 2

## THE BRITISH NOVEL

"Police notwithstanding, I should like to put everything in my novel." That was roughly what James Joyce had in mind when, in 1914, he began to write *Ulysses*, and inevitably the police had something to say about it. The trouble began even before it had been completed; its serial publication was stopped by the American courts. The complete work appeared in Paris in 1922, and there was an interval of nearly twenty years before the authorities allowed it to be published and sold in England. It is not likely that a book so vast and difficult will ever have many readers, but we cannot afford to ignore it in this OUTLINE. Its gigantic shadow falls aslant the whole of our period, and writers who have never read it—perhaps never even heard of it—have yet been influenced by it in one way or another.

James Joyce (1882–1941) was born in Dublin. There he spent the first twenty years of his life, a fact of importance, for all his work is strewn with references to his native city, although the fact appears at its clearest in his lucidly written and artistically admirable volume of short stories, *Dubliners* (1914). He studied medicine in Paris, thought of becoming a concert singer, and finally took to writing. *Ulysses* was written in Trieste, Zurich, and Paris. It is a record of a single day, June 16, 1904, in the life of a small group in Dublin; the chief characters are Stephen Dedalus (the author), who had already appeared in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), and Leopold Bloom, a middle-aged advertisement canvasser. Their actions and the thoughts that passed through their minds are presented in great detail and by a variety of methods, some of which were new to fiction. Much of the novel is thoroughly unpleasant, but it cannot be said that Joyce gives undue prominence to the less savoury episodes; he is no pornographer. One aspect of his resourcefulness is the ingenuity with which he relates manner to matter. He takes unprecedented liberties with words, breaking them down, cementing them together, making then uncover hidden meanings; and they respond often enough to justify this treatment. But why call the novel *Ulysses*? it may be asked. Because it is an elaborate series of parallels with the incidents of Homer's poem. Thus Bloom is Ulysses; Dedalus is Telemachus.

*Ulysses* had explored the unconscious mind; Joyce now set himself to dig deeper, to follow the mind into the darkness of the subconscious, and the result was the verbal nightmare of *Finnegan's Wake*, published under that title in 1939 but known during the seventeen years of its

composition as *Work in Progress*. Finnegan need not detain us ; it will be enough to consider this extract :

Who'll brighten Brayhouth and bait the Bull Bailey and never despair of Loricansby. 'Tis an ill weed blows no poppy good. And this labour's worthy if my higher. Oil for need and toil for feed and a walk with the band for Job Loos.

The apologists for Joyce point out that in framing such cabalistic incantations—and there are thousands and thousands of them—he chose each word deliberately, packing it with an allusiveness that can be brought to light by sympathetic study. It does assist understanding of the above to be told that Brayhouth echoes the name of a seaside resort and Bailey the name of a lighthouse (as well as recalling the hero of a comic song). But language so recondite as this has lost all power of communication ; it is a reversion to the mumbo-jumbo of the medicine-man. The best defence of it that can be put forward is that it is intended to appeal to the ear rather than to the intelligence, and Joyce himself seems to have taken pleasure in the story of the servant-girl who was found outside his door during a reading of his manuscript. Her excuse was that she had been listening to "the fine music Monsieur has made !" The book is a stupendous monument, a "folly" blocking the literary landscape, and there may be treasures concealed in it. But the door is locked, very few have the key. No one can get in to turn on the lights.

While Joyce was groping towards a new technique in the monologue of Mrs. Bloom in *Ulysses*, Dorothy M. Richardson was recording "the stream of consciousness" of her single character, Miriam Henderson, in the series of novels now collectively entitled *Pilgrimage*. When *Pointed Roofs* appeared in 1915 the idea of photographing a heroine's thought-stream was startlingly new. Later the technique became familiar ; but Dorothy Richardson deserves the credit due to a pioneer. It is no fault of hers that some of her imitators have reduced the method to a tedious absurdity.

### § 3

Since D. H. Lawrence died in 1930 at the age of forty-five, the suspicion has grown that he was a false prophet. It is seen now that his exaltation of instinct over reason, of body over mind, was really nothing more than an aspect of that primitivism which expresses itself in dance music based on the rhythms of the kraal. But his gospel happened to fall upon ears that were attuned to hear it. The world he wrote for was mortally sick, and it snatched eagerly at the new hope he offered. Civilisation had failed ;



civilisation had precipitated a murderous war; therefore we must rid ourselves of artificial thwartings and repressions; we must get back to a more elemental way of living. There was enough truth in this to make it seem almost like the revelation of a new Messiah, and it was reinforced by the teachings of Freud, which had just then begun to influence thought and behaviour.

The discrediting of Lawrence's gospel has not diminished his stature as an artist. Nearly all his writing—poems, travels, essays, and fiction—is unmistakably the work of a man of genius. His novels crackle with energy; one feels that they must have been written in a fever of creative excitement. And so they were. Lawrence once told Aldous Huxley that he had written 145 pages of a novel without knowing what it was about. He was incapable of revision. If he was dissatisfied he rewrote; all his major novels are said to have been rewritten three times.

Beginning with *The White Peacock* in 1911, he poured out books inexhaustibly, drawing always from within himself, for ordinary human activities did not interest him. "My motto," he declared, "is art for *my* sake." His genius possessed him to the end, but he never surpassed the early *Sons and Lovers* (1913) which is a story (his own) of a man's devotion to an adored mother and the effect of the conflict and communion of their personalities on his emotional development.

Lawrence was the son of a miner. For a time he earned his living as a school teacher in London, but he was soon attracted to literary Bohemianism. *The Rainbow* (1915) brought him into conflict with the authorities, and thereafter he spent most of his life abroad. The notorious *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is one of the least successful of Lawrence's novels, but the famous case that followed its unabridged publication by Penguin Books has at last established a distinction between art and pornography in the application of the Obscenity Act.

#### § 4

Winifred Holtby prefaced her study of Virginia Woolf with a chapter entitled "The Advantages of Being Virginia Stephen." And it certainly was an advantage to be born the daughter of that great Victorian man of letters, Sir Leslie Stephen. She had, too, a gifted sister, Vanessa, who was later to marry Clive Bell, the art critic, and win fame as a painter. That intellectual atmosphere of her childhood was never lost; she continued to breathe it when she married Leonard Woolf, the critic and sociologist. Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) sees life as a turning wave, to use one of her

favourite images, and her aim is to catch the drops on its crest, to make them luminous for a moment before they break and fall. Thus she is concerned in her novels with the significant instant, and we learn about the inner and outer lives of her characters through a sudden flash, during which we see heightened details of their surroundings, or their thoughts jiggling up and down like motes caught in the beam of a torch. Her special gift is her power of communicating the mystery of passing time. This is shown most remarkably in *To the Lighthouse* (1927). For half of the book time is held suspended, while the Ramsay family and their friends muse and talk after dinner. Then it is suddenly released, and in the interlude called "Time Passes" it speeds with the velocity of a cataract over the war years intervening between the Ramsays' departure and return. She made another and even bolder experiment with time in *Orlando*, a biographical fantasy in which the life of a boy-girl character is made to span the centuries from Elizabethan times down to 1928.

Not all her methods are equally successful. She did not repeat the experiment of *The Waves* (1931). Here the characters are drowned in a sea-green world of the subconscious, through which their spoken thoughts flicker like fish. The book is composed of recitatives, all in the same idiom, over which rolls the surge of symbolic waves. Some critics consider that she failed again in *The Years* (1937). Its weakness is that the multitude of small scenes into which it is broken up produce an effect of petrification; its life is not so much suspended as frozen. Possibly her best novel is *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). We meet the heroine on a single day of her life, while she is preparing to give a party. Nothing is directly described, but as the book moves forward its clouds of words resolve into a definite picture of the heroine and her setting.

Mrs. Woolf's work shows the influence of Proust, and also of E. M. Forster. Forster was born in 1879 and is a fellow of King's College, Cambridge. His position in the literature of the time is curious. He has written few books—published, except for the first group of four, at long intervals; yet his reputation stands very high. He owes it to the mellow wisdom of his writing and to his profound insight into character. He is abnormally sensitive to the conflict of good and evil, and this, with variations, was the theme of all his early books, of which the best known is *Howards End* (1911). His psychological understanding is so acute that he can get under the skin of other races than his own. No one has written better of the suffering caused by antagonism between the educated Indian and a narrow-minded section of British officialdom. *A Passage to India* (1924) is already looked upon as a classic.



## § 5

Sir Hugh Walpole (1884-1941) stands at the head of the traditional novelists of the period. But he is an important figure in other ways. He was pre-eminent in the literary life of the time. His influence derived in part from his prestige as a man of letters, but also from his abundant enthusiasm for books old and new. His power and popularity were not acquired without effort. He had an unhappy childhood, was a failure at preaching and schoolmastering, and at first showed no great talent for authorship. Yet after the publication of *The Wooden Horse* in 1909 it was plain that he had a future as a romantic novelist. For the next twenty years his progress was steady and unspectacular, clearing the way for the peak achievement of his career, the series of panoramic novels known as *The Herries Chronicle*.

The first volume, *Rogue Herries*, appeared in 1930. It indicated the plan: the interweaving of the history of a family with the history of England. This book and its chain of successors display all Walpole's virtues as a novelist: his gift for story-telling, his creative exuberance, his skill in marshalling an army of characters, his flair for conveying an atmosphere, especially an atmosphere of evil. Everything he writes has zest; it reflects his pleasure, naïve at times, in the colour and variety of life. Seen as a whole, the *Chronicle* is a huge tumbling landscape, full of strong lights and shadows and dramatic incident. Is it a masterpiece? Its adverse critics point out that the character-drawing is robust rather than profound, that Walpole paints with an overloaded brush, that the composition is careless, the psychology too often superficial. These are grave objections.

His reputation will not rest entirely on the Herries books. His novels about "Polchester" had made that placid, yet terrifying, imaginary town real, actual. He had filled Cornish headlands and the old squares of London with characters as diverse as *The Man with Red Hair* (his "thrillers" may survive his more ambitious novels) and *Harmer John*. His "Jeremy" stories had shown unusual understanding of a boy's mind. He had woven his war experiences into two fine novels with a Russian setting, *The Dark Forest* (1916) and *The Secret City* (1919). All these were safely but not timidly traditional, and after 1930, in the intervals of expanding his Herries series, he continued to produce good novels of contemporary life.

Like Walpole a traditionalist, John Buchan (1875-1940) will live, not because of his "thrillers" but because of such novels as *Witchwood* and, to a lesser extent, his biographies (notably *Montrose*, 1928).

Compton Mackenzie (born in 1883) began writing about the same time



as Hugh Walpole. The most important of his early novels was *Sinister Street*, a long, detailed story of school and university life which came out in two volumes in 1913 and 1914. It has begot many literary children, of which the most striking is probably Rosamond Lehmann's *Dusty Answer*. Fifteen years later he returned to the semi-autobiographical vein of *Sinister Street* with a long novel in four parts, entitled *The Four Winds of Love*. It is much richer in texture than the earlier work, but it is less spontaneous and perhaps unduly weighted with metaphysical speculation. Compton Mackenzie is brilliantly gifted.

Frank Swinnerton, born a year after Compton Mackenzie, claims attention as the author of *Nocturne* (1917), a story of two sisters which delighted Arnold Bennett (aboard whose yacht it was partly written). The action is compressed within a few hours, a technical novelty which has since had many imitators. Swinnerton's novels record the reaction to life—especially suburban life—of a gifted observer who has a generous heart. Probably his best novel is *The Georgian House* (1932).

The same quickness of sympathy with the ordinary man and woman is found in J. B. Priestley's spacious chronicles of London and provincial England. *The Good Companions* (1929) brought romance out of the greyness of the Midlands. This novel was a signpost. It marked the disappearance, at least temporarily, of the introspective fiction that had been characteristic of the twenties. The design is poor, and the tale, which concerns the wanderings of a concert party, is held together by its atmosphere, a kind of warm heartiness that is not far removed from sentimentality. Its success was enormous, but the London novel that followed a year later, *Angel Pavement*, is better planned, introduces a group of characters who are equally lifelike, and has some comic passages almost worthy of Dickens.

Francis Brett Young (1884–1955) was a doctor who turned most successfully to literature. His finest novels were *My Brother Jonathan*, a study of his profession, and *Portrait of Clare*, a leisurely picture of country life which was the forerunner of many such. Brett Young travelled a great deal but eventually settled in the remote countryside of the upper Severn valley of which he has left us many lovely pictures in his books. One of his last works was a long, but not outstandingly good poem about England.

There are at least twenty other novelists of the period who have produced work that may prove to be of permanent value: Maurice Baring, David Garnett, Richard Church, who after a very long series of books—poetry, novels, criticism, essays—marked by sensitive thought and writing, came into his own in 1955 with a lovely autobiographical book, *Over the Bridge*, H. M. Tomlinson, J. D. Beresford, Rhys Davies, L. A. G. Strong, Gerald Bullett, R. H. Mottram, C. S. Forester, John Brophy, Claude Houghton, Geoffrey Household, James Hilton, Jack Lindsay, and among



the women, Constance Holme, F. Tennyson Jesse (a fine intelligence and a fine artist : witness *A Pin to See the Peepshow* and *Act of God*), Dorothy Sayers (the best English crime-detection novelist since the war of 1914-1918), Stella Benson, Naomi Mitchison, Rose Macaulay, Phyllis Bentley, Clemence Dane, Margaret Irwin, Beatrice Kean Seymour. It is impossible to do more than mention some of their names, but a reference may be made in passing to Mary Webb (1881-1927). She was a mystic, gifted with a cloudy imagination through which she saw nature as a panacea of man's ills, and she wrote with the fervour of a poet, often with a poet's command of phrase. At her best her writing has a lyrical intensity ; at its worst it is sentimental and strained. Of her sheaf of novels, all set in her native Shropshire, the best-known is *Precious Bane* (1925), which was "discovered" through a chance remark made at a literary banquet by Earl Baldwin, then Prime Minister.

## § 6

The writers we have discussed in the preceding section are all either romantics or traditionalists. We have now to consider a group of writers whose outlook is realistic. With them we shall bracket the satirists.

Somerset Maugham (born in 1874) has been accused of cynicism. The charge is unfair. The early Maugham, as in his first novel, *Liza of Lambeth* (1897), wrote under the influence of Zola and other French naturalist novelists ; so also did George Moore. But it was a mental, not a sentimental influence. Those who care to look for it will discover plenty of evidence in his books that he is very far from being indifferent to the suffering of the world. He is so aware of it that he must keep his emotions rigidly under control, and here he is helped by his temperamental fastidiousness : he has a horror of gush. There is no suggestion of malice behind the cruelty of much of his writing. He is cruel because his scrupulous honesty compels him to present life as it is—and he sees it with uncommon acuteness. Through all his major work—*Of Human Bondage* (1915) ; *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919), which fictionises the strange and romantic life of the French painter, Paul Gauguin ; *Cakes and Ale* (1930)—runs a strain of pity. The Mildred who enslaves the autobiographical hero in *Of Human Bondage* is perhaps the most odious woman in fiction. Yet she is drawn dispassionately and one can even feel sorry for her. Maugham will not allow himself to pass judgment : there is no overt disapproval. Far more telling than moral indignation, however, is the emphasis laid on such physical detail as the greenish pallor of Mildred's



skin. When Maugham is dealing with a sympathetic character his pity is capable of flowering into tenderness. Cynical is the last word one would think of applying to the portrait of Rose in *Cakes and Ale*; it is touched with a quality that might almost be called reverence.

The paradox of Maugham is that in spite of his abnormal self-sufficiency (which was forced on him by his shyness) he takes an intense interest in his fellow-beings. He confessed in his artistic credo *The Summing-Up* (1938) that he could never walk down one side of Piccadilly without wondering what was happening on the other. And Piccadilly is not the only field of his exploration; he carried his notebook and the same eager curiosity into all parts of the world. He is particularly successful as an interpreter of the East.

Maugham was trained as a doctor, and but for the success of his early plays and novels he would probably have made medicine his career.

Aldous Huxley (b. 1894) is equally curious about human beings, and equally aloof, but his curiosity is that of a scientist examining strange creatures under a microscope, or (as one critic has put it) through the walls of an aquarium; and his detachment springs not from shyness but from disgust. *Brave New World* (1932) and *After Many a Summer* (1939) are bitter satires on mechanised civilisation. His most impressive novel is *Point Counter Point* (1928). This is a complete microcosm of the intellectual life of the 'twenties and many of its leaders—D. H. Lawrence, for example—appear under thin disguises. *Those Barren Leaves* (1925) also expresses the disorientation and frustration of the period. It is a long, meditative novel with an Italian setting. The knowledge displayed in Huxley's books is encyclopædic; his passion for learning befits the grandson of Thomas Huxley and the brother of Julian. But his erudition does not make him a good novelist.

Like Swift, Huxley can never forget that the human mind is housed in the body of an animal, and completely dependent on it. The thought galls and humiliates him: hence his obsession with animalism. Like Swift again, he is impatient with human stupidity.

In his later years Huxley, living in America, has become a mystic and adopted the philosophy of detachment from the world and the flesh. This change of attitude was studied in his novel *Eyeless in Gaza*, but is made clear in such work as *Grey Eminence*, a study of the conflict of spiritual and worldly power, and *The Perennial Philosophy*, an anthology of mystical writings annotated and commented upon by Huxley. His later novel, *Ape and Essence*, is a bitter Jeremiad showing the world after an atomic war given over entirely to a totalitarian rule and a "religion" of cruelty and sexual lust.

Richard Aldington's anger with mankind may also be rooted in dis-



illusion. It is no accident that he is the author of an excellent study of Voltaire. Voltaire pursued what he called infamy with unrelenting hatred. So does Aldington. But he lacks the great Frenchman's good temper. He is too impetuous, too exasperated. A favourite theme with him is the right of the individual to live his own life in his own way. His novels illustrate the conflict that arises when society challenges this right. In time of war the conflict naturally takes an acute form: hence the situation developed in *Death of a Hero* (1929), which remains his best novel. It is less generally known that he is an original and important poet.

Though inferior to Aldington as a craftsman, Wyndham Lewis has an even more brilliant talent. He is specially concerned with the relation of the artist to society. Using a language that owes something to Joyce he produced in 1930 a vast satire on the artistic follies and futilities of the age, called *The Apes of God*. A trilogy, *The Human Age*, begun in 1930, has been completed in recent years. It is a modern cynical, critical *Divine Comedy*, its scenes in the after-life, where James Pullman, a deceased author of Lewis's own type, reviews man and the universe. He died in 1957.

Eric Linklater (b. 1899) made his reputation with *Juan in America* (1931). He excels in creating sophisticated entertainments that are also ironic comments on civilisation. Underlying his gusto is a vein of intense seriousness. It comes out in the patriotic passages of *Magnus Merriman* (1933) a long novel in which the Rabelaisian hero is translated from Edinburgh to the Orkneys. Linklater was born there, and in a way the novel was prophetic, for not long afterwards he returned to make his home in the islands. He wields an uncommonly brilliant style. It has an Elizabethan richness; recondite words sparkle in his sentences.

Evelyn Waugh, one of the two gifted sons of Arthur Waugh, the publisher, creates a comic world not unlike Linklater's but his shafts are mostly aimed at a small section of English society. In *Decline and Fall* (1928) and *Vile Bodies* (1930) he ridiculed the frivolous, over-civilised "smart set" of the 'twenties. His world is peopled almost exclusively by vicious or worthless characters, but in its rarefied air real life standards of conduct cease to have meaning. Waugh is the best kind of moralist; he dissolves evil with laughter. His later work, while retaining satire, is greatly influenced by his adherence to the Roman Catholic Church.

William Gerhardt's sense of the aimlessness of modern life is just as sharp. In *The Polyglots* (1925) his characters shift over the earth, achieving nothing, living only for the moment. Gerhardt was born and brought up in Russia, and the mood of his fiction alternates in the Russian manner between gaiety and sadness. Yet his view of life does not change; not for nothing did he call one of his novels *Futility*. He failed, however, to fulfil the promise of the first decade of his literary career.



## THE AMERICAN NOVEL

The American novel of the period is in some ways more interesting than its English counterpart. It is more buoyant, more vital. It gives the impression that behind it are big reserves of power. It reflects the enthusiasm of men face to face with a great opportunity. For more than a hundred years literary America had put itself under the tutelage of England. Then suddenly it came of age and woke up to the fact that the New World, with its amalgam of races, its clash of cultures, was far wealthier in the raw material of literature than the Old. No wonder there was excitement. We shall find, however, that in America as in England there was incessant preoccupation with technique during this period, and we may suspect that it had a tendency to sidetrack creative energy.

John Dos Passos, born in 1896, stands out as the innovator of the cinema method in fiction. He aims at cutting away all superfluous linkages between his scenes, and they shuttle past with the speed of an express train. It is a method which served him well in *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), a panoramic novel of New York. He employed it again, more elaborately, in *The 42nd Parallel* (1930), a story which dramatises the growth of industrial democracy in America. This is more than a novel; it is loaded with sociological comment and it includes nine biographical sketches of American leaders. Even bolder was his experiment in *Nineteen-Nineteen*, published a year later, with such devices as "the Camera-Eye" and the "News-Reel." The technique developed by Dos Passos helps him to cover a great deal of ground and by means of it he is able to suggest the headlong tempo of American life. But it needs careful handling, otherwise the effect it produces is bewilderment, and one cannot avoid the feeling that Dos Passos would do even better in the "straight" novel.

The hugeness and variety of the American scene are conveyed very differently by Thomas Wolfe (1900-1938). His method is subjective: *Look Homeward, Angel* (1929) and *Of Time and the River* (1935) are turbulent masses of words in which the personal voice of the author is always heard, though he does make some attempt to externalise his experiences. *Look Homeward, Angel*, for example, is the story of a child called Eugene who is brought up in a repressive Southern household and finally goes (as Wolfe did) to Harvard. His writing is unequal and he was defeated by the length and formlessness of his own outpourings. Yet he has a note of rhetorical prophecy that recalls the Herman Melville of *Moby Dick*; nevertheless, it is doubtful whether his work will endure.



There is even stranger poetry in the novels of William Faulkner, a greater writer, a greater novelist (born in 1897). He is preoccupied with evil and insanity—but, as one critic has pointed out, so was Dostoevsky. Two of his characteristic figures are Jones, the satyr who slouches in the background of his war novel, *Soldiers' Pay* (1926), and Benjy, the incoherent idiot of *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). In *The Wild Palms* (1939) and *Pylon* (1940), he shows that he has sloughed his immaturities; *Go Down, Moses* (1942) confirms his potent maturity. He is an unpredictable writer, always experimenting with new narrative devices and new means of communication. Sometimes the effects he achieves are magical; there are passages evoking a mood or an atmosphere in which the words seem almost to vibrate with the refracted heat and light of his imagination. His favourite background is the Mississippi region. He was well equipped to interpret it; Southern life had been familiar to him from birth and after war experiences as an airman he made his home at Oxford, in his native province, where he combined house-painting with novel-writing. He has also published poems and short stories; they should be read.

The work of these three is thoroughly American both in setting and spirit. But there are other important American novelists of the period who go far afield for their themes and show marked continental and other influences. Louis Bromfield, for instance, though he began as a chronicler of American life with his tetralogy, *Escape* (1927), took Italy as his background in *The Strange Case of Annie Spragg* (1928) and went to India in *The Rains Came* (1938). Thornton Wilder brings his cool, economical style to the exploration of foreign cultures and distant epochs: eighteenth-century Lima in his most famous novel, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (1927), Græco-Roman society in *The Woman of Andros* (1930). Much of the work of Ernest Hemingway belongs geographically to Europe and Africa: the background of *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) is Caporetto. This is perhaps his most characteristic work; many critics, however, prefer *Death in the Afternoon*, a bull-fighting masterpiece, and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1941). His laconic sentences and air of half-callous detachment—really the obverse of sentimentality—had a great influence on his contemporaries and led to the appearance of the hard-boiled school of writers, for whom toughness is everything. Pearl S. Buck, Nobel prize winner in 1938, drew her inspiration not from America but from China, interpreting the life of its peasants in a style of almost Biblical simplicity (which can become monotonous) in such novels as *The Good Earth* (1931).

Definitely, yet not narrowly American, however, are the novels of Paul Horgan, a very talented writer: he may go very far. His best-known novel is *Main Line West*, but superior to it, on every count, is *The Lamp on the Plains*.



The most gifted of the writers who had just begun to reach their full powers in 1939 are Frederick Prokosch and John Steinbeck. Prokosch's *The Seven Who Fled* has vision and allegoric intensity. Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* is an epic, with impassioned lyrical interludes, about the trek across America of a family driven from their homes by modern industrialism; his *Of Mice and Men*, much less sociological but no less moving, is, being art rather than social document, a better novel. Steinbeck excels also in historical narrative and in leisurely description and leisurely, deeply sympathetic characterisation. He is, indeed, the greatest of those American novelists whose work comes after the war of 1914-1918.

## § 8

## THE EUROPEAN NOVEL

Modern French novelists have tended to concentrate on the family chronicle—the *roman-fleuve*, the novel-river—of which the best-known examples are Roger Martin du Gard's *The Thibaults*, Georges Duhamel's *The Pasquier Chronicle*, and Jules Romains' *Men of Good Will*.

The last is the most ambitious and the most shapeless. Here the river is a Nile that has overflowed its banks. Romains set out to record all the activities of modern man in a Parisian setting. That much is clear. But apart from the general aim there is nothing to establish a unity; no dominant, reiterated idea, no point of view. And so the reader is left floundering, and his patience is further tried when he discovers that he has to fight his way against the backwash of the retrogressions by which Romains tries to give simultaneous movement to the huge mass of his characters. An American critic has compared his novel with "an enormous toy track where each horse is moved forward at unequal intervals." Romains, however, has written some very good novels apart from his cycle, and several clever, very actable plays.

Outside the chroniclers stands Jean Giraudoux, whose intellectual fancy can see fish tumbling from the back of a cart as "commas in mourning"; Colette, whose charm may be analysed as a mingling of innocence and sophistication; the sombre Julien Green; André Malraux, whose favourite theme is revolution; François Mauriac, a deeply religious writer whose Catholicism makes him see all human problems in terms of a conflict between flesh and spirit. There is also Henry de Montherlant. His early novels were adolescent outpourings and of small account. But in *The Celibates* (1934), a story of a decaying nobleman, he suddenly revealed great gifts as a satirist and psychologist. Behind these younger con-



temporaries looms the figure of André Gide (1869–1951), satanic, fastidious, introspective, more of an autobiographer than a novelist, yet indirectly influencing them all; he himself was much influenced by the Russians—and by Nietzsche.

Gide alone of the French writers we have mentioned is individually of the same stature as Thomas Mann (1875–1956), the German author who in 1937 assumed Czech citizenship and later went to America. He had proved himself a novelist on the grand scale as early as 1901, when he published *Buddenbrooks*, one of the first novels to chronicle the history of a family through several generations. It is a reconstruction of the world he had known as a child. He was brought up in Lübeck, heir to a long line of patrician merchants. The days of their greatest power and affluence were over but the material symbols of their prosperity still endured—their fine houses, their massive furniture, their art collections; and it was this atmosphere of bourgeois well-being that Mann recaptured. He did it naturalistically, by a patient accumulation of detail. The physical surroundings of his merchants were put before us with the utmost exactitude, so that we know precisely what they ate, how they dressed, how they furnished their rooms. But he was not just a photographer. The acuteness of his observation was matched by his grasp of the issues involved in the slow decline of his family, ending at last in the disappearance of the trader and the emergence of the artist. *Buddenbrooks* is a work of philosophic imagination as well as a monumental piece of realism. And when he wrote it he was only twenty-six.

As his art matured he tended more and more to discard the realistic method. The culmination of this process was reached in *The Magic Mountain* (1924). Here he had to deal with something bigger than the disintegration of a family; nothing less than the break-up of a world order. Through the eyes of two consumptives in a sanatorium at Davos Platz we see contemporary society shaken to its roots by the impact of new forces and new ideas, and we have a strange sense of living in a doomed world—the world of pre-1914. *The Magic Mountain* is an attempt to embrace the whole life and thought of the time, and its composition occupied Mann for ten years. Not long after it appeared he was awarded the Nobel prize.

“By 1930 the field of fiction was dominated by two figures—Thomas Mann and Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer” (Gilbert Waterhouse). The latter is the lesser figure. A mystic, he imparted something new to the historical novel; he is also a notable and sensitive stylist. In *Amor Dei* (1908), he fictionalised the life of Spinoza; Paracelsus was the hero of a great trilogy (1917–1925). Another lesser man, Heinrich Mann, also wrote an important trilogy; published in 1914–1925, it savagely stripped that Germany of all its dignity—physical, intellectual, moral.



In his lifetime Franz Kafka (1883-1925) was, except for *The Process* (1924), little known. But on the publication of *The Castle* and *The Trial* (unfinished novels which he had instructed his literary executor to burn) he was acclaimed as a genius. *The Castle* has been called one of the great allegories of the world. It is the story of a spiritual pilgrimage, of a troubled soul making its way anxiously and humbly towards salvation through a landscape which, unlike Bunyan's, is unplotted and has no guide-posts. The soul is that of a modern man: hence the difficulty of its progress. For modern man, as Kafka recognised, had to take account of obstacles to belief which no previous generation encountered. *The Castle* ends with the hero about to suffer one of his many disappointments, yet it is clear that Kafka was not a pessimist; he believed that a key to life exists, and that it can be found. Though his subject-matter is so complex his style is invariably lucid, and in *The Castle* at least he handles narrative with the ease of a born story-teller.

Other important figures in Central European literature are the poet-novelist, Franz Werfel (born, like Kafka, in Prague), whose vision of life is founded on the Christian belief that men must learn to love one another, and whose novel, *The Song of Bernadette*, lovely and moving, is probably his best—at least to the end of 1942; Jacob Wassermann, whose novels of suffering and poverty are re-creations of his own youthful experiences in Bavaria; Arnold Zweig, who found dramatic shape in *The Case of Sergeant Grischa* (1928) for the tragedy of the individual crushed between the ponderous millstones of two civilised nations at war with one another; and Stefan Zweig (1881-1942), a more general writer of perhaps even greater ability, who died tragically, one whose quality can be gauged by his books on Jeremiah, Tolstoy, Brazil, in his poems, his biographies, his critical studies, his near-philosophical writings, his travel books, and his poignant *Reminiscences* (1943).

Italy, in the early twentieth century, contributed few novelists of note, exceptions being Grazia Deledda, who, a Nobel prize winner, writes vividly, powerfully, perceptively of her native Sardinia, and the lesser Matilde Serao, too sentimental, and Anny Vivanti; whereas Spain has at least four notable novelists and short-story writers in this our century: Palacio Valdes, polished, agreeable, unobtrusively romantic, extremely readable; Pio Baroja, relentlessly realist and quietly powerful; Azorin, subtle, delightful, cosmopolitan; and Ramon del Valle Inclan, sensuously satirical. Vicente Blasco Ibañez has already been mentioned (see the last section of Chapter XXXV).

The most diversely talented of twentieth-century Scandinavian novelists is Sigrid Undset, who was born in Denmark in 1882, the daughter of a Norwegian archæologist and author. She began her career with a series



of realistic novels about middle-class life in Oslo. They are mostly studies in feminine psychology and their heroines pass through experiences not unlike her own ; that is to say, they work at humdrum jobs (Sigrid Undset was a secretary for ten years), escape to a more romantic environment, and then suffer disillusion, often through an unhappy love affair.

About 1920 Sigrid Undset turned her back on contemporary life and developed a profound interest in mediævalism. The novels she now produced were the first in which modern psychological discoveries are applied to the interpretation of characters belonging to remote ages. This approach to historical fiction gave it a new depth and enhanced its status, both in Scandinavia and abroad. The trilogy of *Kristin Lavransdatter* makes fourteenth-century Norway as real as the Norway of to-day. Though it was based on extensive research there is no museum air about it, and *Kristin* is presented in the round, not seen from in front. No one who was not intuitively in sympathy with the Middle Ages could have entered the life of the times with such directness. Sigrid Undset probably owed something to the mediæval studies she had undertaken as her father's assistant, more to the fervour of her Catholicism—for the Roman Catholic Church was, of course, at the height of its power during the Middle Ages, and a Catholic might well feel pride in the cultural and spiritual unity which it managed to impose on Europe. From one point of view *Kristin Lavransdatter* is a long magnificat in praise of the splendour of the Catholic Church at a time when all Christendom acknowledged its authority.

In this novel (completed in 1922) *Kristin*, the heroine, asserts her right to love a man who is unworthy of her. The same theme, inverted, recurs in Sigrid Undset's next work, *Olaf Audunssøn* ; here it is the woman who is unworthy. The four volumes of *Olaf* appeared between 1925 and 1930, and in 1928 Sigrid Undset was awarded the Nobel prize. With *Olaf* the middle phase of her career ended. Her later novels are studies of modern life.

Selma Lagerlöf, born in Värmland, Sweden, in 1858, was the first woman to win the Nobel prize. Her historical imagination was nourished on the folk-tales and legends of her native province, and from this source all her best work was derived. The success of *Gösta Berling* (1891) led the Swedish royal family to interest itself in her career, and she was soon able to abandon teaching for literature. *Marbacka* (1922), a story of her home and its traditions, was widely read outside Scandinavia and she consolidated her international reputation with the trilogy known as *The Ring of the Löwenskölds* (1928). She was a natural story-teller, and her style has both the virtues and defects of her romanticism. She died in 1940.

Finland has produced at least one outstanding novelist : F. E. Sillanpää Nobel prize winner in 1939. *Meek Heritage* and *Fallen Asleep While Young*



made him known in England ; in his own country the short novel *Hiltu and Ragnar* is highly esteemed. His method is simple and direct (but not artless), and all his work is marked by deep sympathy with the lot of the peasant.

## § 9

## THE SHORT STORY

Many of the best short stories of the time—D. H. Lawrence's *The Fox*, Huxley's *The Gioconda Smile*, Maugham's *Rain*—were written by novelists ; many of them, too, were much influenced by Chekhov, H. E. Bates being one of those so influenced. Maugham in particular found the medium happily suited to his gifts, and he had great success in the objective, smoothly carpentered type of story associated with de Maupassant. There were several writers, however, whose vision of life was expressed mainly or entirely in the short-story form. Of these the most individual is Katherine Mansfield.

She was born in New Zealand in 1890, married J. Middleton Murry, future editor of *The Adelphi*, in 1913, fought consumption in Swiss sanatoriums, and died at Fontainebleau in 1923. She has been compared, perhaps extravagantly, with Chekhov. Her manner and method resemble his, and undoubtedly she recognised that she was spiritually akin to him. But she would probably have written much as she did if she had never read Chekhov. Her approach to life has a sort of trembling eagerness ; it is almost an attitude of adoration. Her sketches and "vignettes" (as she called them) are luminous, delicately perceptive, and full of overtones. The best of them appeared in collections published between 1920 and 1927 : *Bliss*, *The Garden Party*, *The Doves' Nest*.

A. E. Coppard was over forty when the privately printed *Adam and Eve and Pinch Me* (1921) made him known as a teller of fanciful tales shot with a queer lyricism. His inspiration was the folk-tale and to his sketches of country life and character he brought a bizarre note reminiscent of the seventeenth-century religious poets, Donne and Herbert. Ford Madox Ford claimed that he was "almost the first English writer to get into English prose the peculiar quality of English lyric poetry." He died in 1957.

The compliment is, of course, exaggerated : it might, except for the inexorability of dates, have been applied to a prose-poet whose scope is perhaps wider : H. E. Bates (b. 1905). Bates began as a novelist with *The Two Sisters* and he continued to produce novels, but he is essentially a short-story writer. Even his novels tend to split up into lyrical and dramatic interludes. There is a decorative lushness about his early stories ;



as he matured his line grew firmer, and to his studies of romantic girls and frustrated women he added a varied company of rural types, drawn with robustness and precision. Humour entered his work with the barnacled figure of Uncle Silas, who is reputed to have been inspired by memories of his maternal grandfather. As a landscape-painter he has few equals and very few superiors: his evocation of natural beauty is always subtly related to the moods of his characters.

## § 10

## BRITISH POETS

Even a casual student of the poetry that was produced in England from 1914 onwards must be struck at once by two curious facts. First, that there is hardly a single figure—apart from Yeats, and his genius was in flower before 1914—of whose permanent importance we can be certain. There is a high level of competence, but on the whole modern poetry is a chorus of essentially minor voices. Second, poetry was not popular; it did not sell, and much of it was published in the form of the “slim volume” or the anthology. True, there was a temporary boom during the war years, but no serious poet reached the ear of the common man as Tennyson, for example, had done, or earned financial rewards in any way comparable with his. And yet the output of poetry was voluminous. Over a thousand authors were included in the *Bibliography of Modern Poetry* issued by the Poetry Bookshop in 1920. The list covered only the eight preceding years and did not include anthologies. Of the thousand authors mentioned the flatteringly large number of a hundred and four were considered worthy of a critical note. Dozens of them, of course, are already little more than names to the present generation of poetry readers.

When the period began there were two rival schools, the Georgians and the Imagists. We will take the Georgians first. They were so called because their most characteristic work is to be found in the anthologies edited by Edward (later, Sir Edward) Marsh that appeared annually for ten years under the title of *Georgian Poetry*. The leader of the movement was Harold Monroe (1879–1932). In 1912 he and his wife founded the Poetry Bookshop, through which the Georgian volumes were published. Their courage had its reward; they were able to communicate their enthusiasm for poetry to a new audience. The hour was propitious, for sensibilities had been heightened by war conditions, but that does not minimise their achievement. Monroe's own poetry was individual in so

far as he tried to make familiar experiences significant, using a language that approximated to that of ordinary speech. In title, theme, and treatment his *Week-end* is a representative sample of the work of the Georgians.

When Jack (later Sir John) Squire (1884-1958) joined the group in 1917 he was already famous as a parodist. Having guyed so many styles it took him some time to find one of his own, but there can be no question of his originality. What he lacked, in common with most of the Georgians, was depth of feeling. *The Lily of Malud*, though admittedly a *tour de force*, arouses no emotion stronger than delight in the skill with which the poet maintains his insistent tom-tom beat. *Winter Nightfall* records an experience that has been sincerely rather than deeply felt, and the same is true of *Paradise Lost*, with its nostalgic memories of

The blue and tangled shadows dropped from the crusted branches  
Of the warped apple trees upon the orchard grass.

Squire's influence, like Monro's, was twofold: as a highly accomplished poet, and as the editor for many years of the *London Mercury*, which gave generous encouragement to young poets. Some idea of his mastery of verse rhythms will be conveyed by this extract from *Late Snow*:

The heavy train through the dim country went rolling, rolling,  
Interminably passing misty snow-covered ploughland ridges  
That merged in the snowy sky; came turning meadows, fences,  
Came gullies and passed, and ice-coloured streams under frozen bridges  
Singly in the snow the ghosts of trees were softly pencilled,  
Fainter and fainter, in distance fading, into nothingness gliding,  
But sometimes a crowd of the intricate silver trees of fairyland  
Passed, close and intensely clear, the phantom world hiding.

Another leader of the Georgian group is Robert Nichols, one of the few war poets (*Invocation*, 1915, and *Ardours and Endurances*, 1917), whose reputation survived the war. The imminence of loss sharpened his feeling for such aspects of the English scene as:

An upland field when spring's begun,  
Mellow beneath the evening sun . . .  
A circle of loose and lichened wall  
Over which seven red pines fall. . .

Beauty of that obvious kind did not satisfy W. J. Turner, whose landscapes belong as often as not to a world of dream, conjured out of an imagination that delights in fabulous animals, in exotic fruits, in "flowers with dream-faces." He must be ranked with the Georgians, for it was under their banner that he first revealed himself as a poet, but he is perhaps the least representative of the group. His best work owes nothing to the inspiration of the country week-end. He breathes the same air as Yeats,



the air of a moonlit upland peopled by deer and unicorn, and it is not surprising that Yeats had a great admiration for him. Here is one of his fantastic landscapes :

The Towers of Tantalus I saw  
Above untrodden streets of Time ;  
The sunlight and the moonlight shone  
Together, on great spars of rime.  
Terrestrial lilies were those towers  
In calm sky pools of that dark noon ;  
Calm lay on rocks of frozen light  
The shadow of the Sun and Moon.  
Still, bright-gold chrysanthemums  
Shone in the polished, dim, jade halls  
And at small windows in still woods  
Hung snow-curved, shining waterfalls.

The Georgian movement was purely English. Imagism was not. It had adherents in America, where Amy Lowell was the chief exponent, and it incorporated some of the theories of the French symbolists. The group, which included F. S. Flint, T. E. Hulme, Hilda Doolittle, and Richard Aldington, were called imagists because they set themselves to record experience in terms of concrete images. They stated their aims in a preface to a volume of imagist verse published in 1915. They meant "to use the language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word" and "to create new rhythms—as the expression of new moods—and not to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods." With the imagists is associated the *vers libres* cult, which was imported from France.

There was, of course, nothing new about free verse, which had been successfully exploited years earlier by Walt Whitman. It had a vogue in England, at this period, for several reasons. Young poets welcomed it as a manifestation of liberty ; and also (though they might not have admitted this) because they were tired of the discipline of traditional poetic forms. Moreover they had persuaded themselves into a genuine belief that these forms had outlived their usefulness.

The *vers libristes* probably did little harm and they may have helped to limber up old metres. But liberty was often abused and the result was not poetry but prose set out to look like it. Only the eye could be deceived. The best work in *vers libres* came from Ezra Pound (b. 1885) and D. H. Lawrence, both of whom, ironically enough, could be claimed as Georgians, for some of their early poems appeared in the Georgian volumes. Lawrence's *End of Another Home-Holiday* is perfect of its kind. Metre and emotion are so fused that we hardly notice how loose and wayward is the structure of the stanzas, nor the occasional introduction of rhymed words.

His poems on animals amazingly get the spirit of the creatures, freed from human sentimentality.

Lawrence was too big a poet to remain an imagist. The only other considerable poets in the imagist camp were the Sitwells, and they too broke away from it. Between 1916 and 1921 they were publishing violently anti-Georgian verse in the anthology *Wheels*, sponsored by Edith. The period of their maturity came later, when the dust of the conflict had subsided and the poetic impulse of both Georgians and imagists had exhausted itself.

## § 11

To understand the Sitwells we must know something of their background. Edith was born in 1887, Osbert in 1892, and Sacheverell in 1900, and much of their childhood was spent in close contact with the feudal magnificence of Renishaw Park, a vast rambling house built in the seventeenth century on a North Country estate that had been in the possession of the family since the Middle Ages. Their ancestry was Norman. Their father, Sir George Sitwell, had another house at Scarborough, and here they learned to know the moods of the sea-coast, an influence that is very strong in Edith's poetry. They are widely travelled. They were taken as children to Florence and allowed to wander through Spain and Italy. All this comes out in their work ; behind its intellectual distinction is the heritage of Norman blood, Renishaw and its ancient park, the grandeur of the Yorkshire coast, the heat and colour of the Mediterranean.

Edith is unquestionably the best poet of the three. From the first she was boldly individual in her use of words, and in 1923 her virtuosity drew this tribute from Arnold Bennett : " To my mind Edith Sitwell is the most accomplished technician in verse (unless it be Robert Bridges) now writing. Her skill dazzles me, who once attempted rhyme." Early in her career she upset the traditionalists by proclaiming that the modernist poet's brain was a central sense, interpreting and controlling the other five, and that when words usually connected with a particular sense would not convey his meaning adequately he was entitled to use language associated with another. The best-known illustration of this theory is the poem called *Aubade*, in which occurs the famous line " The morning light *creaks* down again." Another of her ideas, less original, was that the musical shape of a poem should be emphasised, and the poem dissociated as far as possible from the writer. She put this into practice at the Æolean Hall in London in 1923, when she gave a recital from behind a painted representation of a huge female with closed eyes and open mouth.



Her delight in word-patterns—an imagist trait—found expression in such delicious trifles as the following, which matches the movement of a foxtrot :

Old  
     Sir  
         Faulk,  
     Tall as a stork,  
 Before the honeyed fruits of dawn were ripe, would walk  
 And stalk with a gun  
 The reynard-coloured sun  
 Among the pheasant-feathered corn the unicorn has torn,  
 forlorn the  
 Smock-faced sheep  
     Sit  
         And  
         Sleep,  
 Periwigged as William and Mary, weep . . .

But a poem of that kind is all artifice, and the pleasure it gives is purely intellectual. Much more truly representative are the long poems, full of melodious descriptions of scene and character, that mirror her vision of a fairy-tale world: the world of the *Sleeping Beauty* (the title she gave to a collection of verse published in 1924) and of *Troy Park*, which is *Renishaw* transmuted. Its colours are clear and bright and its landscapes are flooded with the remembered radiance of her childhood. Here she is with her brothers, listening to the martial stories of old Colonel Fantock, whose only battles were "with cold poverty and helpless age."

All day within the sweet and ancient gardens  
 He had my childish self for audience—  
 Whose body flat and strange, whose pale straight hair  
 Made me appear as though I had been drowned—  
 (We all have the remote air of a legend)—  
 And Dagobert my brother whose large strength,  
 Great body and grave beauty still reflect  
 The Angevin dead kings from whom we spring . . .  
 And Peregrine the youngest with a naïve  
 Shy grace like a faun's, whose slant eyes seemed  
 The warm green light beneath eternal boughs.

Emotion is not shut out from her Eden. There are lonely figures, moving here and there among the shrilling peacocks, who bring with them the cold air of adult tragedy: Colonel Fantock, "old military ghost with mayfly whiskers"; Mademoiselle Richarde, whose lot condemns her "to come and go unheard, a ghost unseen."

There were several stages in the creation of Edith Sitwell's poetic world. Sir Henry Newbolt writes of its development: "At first it was almost entirely a fairyland, created for the old children of our race by a fay who had once been a human child. To some it was a tangle of strange sounds and bright colours, accepted as without meaning; to others a picture not only beautiful to the eye, but calling to unknown or long-buried senses. Yet she is always—to quote her own words—"a little outside life," gazing through the thin crystal of her imagination, which distorts and magnifies and discloses for her a reality unseen by those of normal vision.

At the beginning, during the 1920's both Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell graduated, as it were, in this school of Sitwell poetry, the former with verse of brilliant satire, the latter with poetry of cold beauty. Their poetry has since suffered from being overshadowed by their own achievements. Sacheverell has become one of the most sensitive of writers on art and places, and Sir Osbert a foremost biographer with his exquisite studies of the Sitwell family and his own recollections.

## § 12

The Georgians were often accused of seeing the country through the eyes of a week-ender. No such charge can be brought against Edmund Blunden, Edward Thomas, or Victoria Sackville-West. They all write knowledgeably of the country: Blunden with delight in intimate detail ("the rose-fumed roach and bluish bream"), Thomas with a sharp sense of the immemorial past overlaying the present, Miss Sackville-West with a perceptive ear for the rhythms of seasonal change and of life lived on the land. Blunden's weakness is that he rarely succeeds in organising his material. The poems in *The Waggoner* and *The Shepherd* reveal remarkable powers of observation, but detail is so multiplied that the general effect is lost. His characteristic lines move stiffly and slowly, like one of the sluggish streams that he is so fond of observing. Much of his poetry resembles Henry Williamson's prose in *Tarka the Otter*. It is too packed; it has to force its way through clusters of consonantal nouns and adjectives. The exactness of his description, however, is astonishing, and sometimes he achieves a memorable line, as when he writes of two almswomen: "All things they have in common, being so poor." He often recalls Crabbe; but a stronger influence was John Clare, whom he edited.

Clare also influenced Edward Thomas (1878-1917). Thomas was a phenomenon: he served a long apprenticeship to prose and did not begin to write poetry until he was in his middle thirties. He discovered his gift in time to produce a sheaf of poems in which the words have a peculiar



inevitability and singing rhythm, though there is hardly one that could not be used prosaically in ordinary speech. The first stanza of *Lights Out* is an example of this transformation :

I have come to the borders of sleep,  
The unfathomable deep  
Forest where all must lose  
Their way, however straight,  
Or winding, soon or late ;  
They cannot choose.

Victoria Sackville-West had the courage to handle an unpopular form, the long poem in blank verse. It gave full scope to her gift for landscape-painting. Her pentameters have a stately movement, varied by such devices as the introduction of occasional short lines. *The Land* (1926) has been called an English *Georgics*—the sort of poem Virgil might have written if he had lived on a Kentish farm in the twentieth century. She is also a memoirist—lively, profound ; and a very fine novelist : witness, for instance, *All Passion Spent*, which should enjoy a lasting fame.

We must be content to pass over several other poets whose note was distinctly individual—Laurence Binyon, T. Sturge Moore, Charlotte Mew, Herbert Palmer, Robert Graves, Edwin Muir, Herbert Read, Humbert Wolfe—and close this section with a glance at the work of Roy Campbell, who stood completely by himself, a proud reactionary with an undisguised contempt for all schools and coteries. Born in Durban in 1902, he lived much in Spain, where he won renown as a bullfighter. He died in an accident there in 1957. During the Spanish civil war he took the side of Franco in opposition to almost all his younger contemporaries. *Flowering Rifle* (1939) was violently propagandist. He seems always to have been conscious of his spiritual isolation, and in one of his early poems he compares himself with the Atlantic island of Tristan da Cunha : “I battle like a rock, aloof and friendless.” The poem that made his name was *The Flaming Terrapin* (1924), an allegory in which primeval force is symbolised by a monster of the ocean. It is wild and vehement, like nearly all Campbell’s work, but it is shot by gleams of poetic genius. He writes of corruption descending

With movements as of one  
Who, diving after pearls, down from the sun  
Along the shaft of his own shadow glides,  
Nearing the twilight of the nether sands,  
Under him swings his body deft and slow,  
Gathers his knees up, reaches down his hands,  
And settles on his shadow like a crow.

In *The Georgiad* (1931) he turned on his feeble contemporaries, using Pope's couplet with Pope's virulence, and adding to it an imaginative splendour of his own :

I'll own my fault—that what I love is rare :  
 The shapely limbs, the tossing flame of hair,  
 The eye whose flame a winged sylph reveals  
 Riding to battle on their crystal wheels :  
 The body tigered with blue straps of muscle,  
 The limbs that spring resilient to the tussle :  
 The diamond valour that has far more worth  
 Than golden crowns and dignity of birth.

## § 13

The appearance of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* in 1922 signalled the opening of a new phase in English poetry. It was not a happy one. There is a curious thinness about the work of the most of the younger poets during the next two decades. In form much of it was new, but it had little of the vigour of youth and in spirit it was old. Its music was tuneless : its characteristic was an obsession (which some thought mere perversity) with ugly sounds and ugly images. For the village green of the Georgians it substituted the gasworks, the rubbish dump ; for musical word-patterns the stringing together of recondite allusions. The truth is that this was not an age in which poets could flourish. They grew up amid the wreckage of a great war and before they could find themselves they were menaced by the advancing shade of another. As the catastrophe became inevitable the self-pitying whine of the 'twenties deepened into something nobler. The poets who reached maturity after 1930 face the future with stoical resignation. It is significant that most of them held communistic beliefs. They sought comfort in reminding themselves that the fate of the individual does not matter.

T. S. Eliot was born in Missouri in 1888. From Harvard he went to the Sorbonne and then to Oxford. He settled in London in 1914, worked for a short time in a bank, taught and lectured, turned publisher, founded and edited *The Criterion*. The first of his poems to attract attention was *The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock* (1917). The free-associated ideas which he puts into this soliloquy of a middle-aged lover show that he had been strongly influenced by the teachings of the psycho-analysts. He was also indebted to the French symbolists, whom he had discovered in 1908 through reading Arthur Symonds's study of the symbolist movement in literature—by his own confession one of the books that affected the course



of his life. *The Sacred Wood* (1920) established his position as a critic. Then came *The Waste Land*.

It is a difficult poem to describe, for the waste land is a wilderness of the soul, related at times to squalid life in London: pubs where women talk drearily of child-bearing and of husbands returned from the war, London Bridge with the tide of workers flowing into the city under a brown fog, the exposed mud-flats of the Thames. This phantasmagoria is presented through a haze of allusions: unrelated echoes of the Elizabethans, the symbolists, Swinburne, vaudeville ballads, the Upanishads. There are even scraps of German and French. In spite of its wilful obscurities, the cumulative effect of the poem is tremendous. Behind it is the same Eliot who in *Morning at the Window* wrote

Of the damp souls of housemaids  
Sprouting despondently at area gates.

All is—not vanity, as in *Ecclesiastes*—but blight, spiritual and material. Stricken with soul-sickness, the poet forces himself to be flippant. Irreverently mocking Goldsmith he writes:

When lovely woman stoops to folly and  
Paces about her room again, alone,  
She smooths her hair with automatic hand,  
And puts a record on the gramophone.

*The Waste Land* is an even more terrible poem than Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night*, with which it has sometimes been compared. To the startled traditionalists it did not seem a poem at all. Yet it has its moments of beauty. There is the lovely opening:

April is the cruellest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain.

Eliot's despair passed. He became less subjective, more traditional, and in 1929, two years after he had been naturalised and received into the Anglican Church, he announced that he was "an Anglo-Catholic in religion, a classicist in literature, and a royalist in politics." This new assurance leads to the solid, almost "metaphysical" symbolism and consciousness of form that distinguish the *Four Quartets* from his earlier religious poetry.

From that time forward Eliot became something of a pontiff in literature. His poetry was no easier to read, but his verse play on the martyrdom of Becket, *Murder in the Cathedral*, was a definite success. This was followed by other plays: *Family Reunion*, *The Cocktail Party*, *The Confidential Clerk*,

written in a tantalizingly difficult style, but significant in their symbolism and concern with basic spiritual issues. Eliot received the Nobel prize and the Order of Merit.

## § 14

About 1930 a new voice made itself heard. This was W. H. Auden (b. 1907). He was joined by C. Day Lewis (b. 1904), with whom he had edited *Oxford Poetry* when they were both undergraduates, and later came Stephen Spender, William Empson, Louis MacNeice, George Barker. These poets, all born in the early years of the twentieth century, had much in common. Most of them were schoolmasters or lecturers, and in politics they inclined towards the Left. They were all trying to come to terms with the new industrial civilisation, and though each has his idiosyncrasies they all used more or less the same idiom. Its characteristic was a turning-away from romantic symbols to imagery borrowed from the mechanised life of their times. Eliot had done this, but with greater self-consciousness. When he compared an evening sky to "a patient etherised upon a table" he knew that he would shock his readers. But when Stephen Spender wrote, "Come, let us praise the gasworks" he was addressing a public which had long been familiar with the modern poet's determination to find beauty, or at any rate significance, in the ugliness of industrialism. Thus the Auden school were able to use unpoetic images with a new assurance, which made for spontaneity. Michael Roberts, himself a poet, claimed—and it is a claim that may be allowed—that Auden's *Poems* and Day Lewis's *From Feathers to Iron* were "the first books in which imagery taken from contemporary life appeared as the natural and spontaneous expression of the poet's thought and feeling."

Technically, the group owed much to Wilfred Owen (killed in action during the First World War) and Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889), the unorthodox Victorian whose experiments with "sprung rhythm" had been brought to light by Robert Bridges in 1918; Hopkins, a Jesuit priest, was a Classical scholar with an original mind and method (see p. 513). Though they avoided traditional metres they did not allow themselves the licence of the *vers libristes*. One of their favourite devices, copied from Owen, was the use of assonance and half-rhymes. Their prevailing mood was mournful—over-solemn in the case of Spender—but it was not nostalgic. Nor was it hopeless. They recognised that life was worth living. A typical statement of their faith was contained in *From Feathers to Iron*:



Suppose that we, to-morrow or the next day,  
 Came to an end—in storm the shafting broken,  
 Or a mistaken signal, the flange lifting—  
 Would that be premature, a text for sorrow?

Say what endurance gives or death denies us.  
 Love's proved in its creation, not eternity :  
 Like leaf or linnet the true heart's affection  
 Is born, dies later, asks no reassurance.

Over dark wood rises one dawn felicitous,  
 Bright through awakened shadows fall her crystal  
 Cadenzas, and once for all the wood is quickened,  
 So our joys visit us and it suffices.

The trouble with most of these poets is that they do not trust their emotions. Intellect predominates over feeling, and the range of their experience is limited. We may hazard a guess that Auden's workers and clerks are not half as sorry for themselves as he would have us believe. The most successful in fusing intellect and emotion is Spender (a nephew of J. A. Spender, the famous editor of the old *Westminster Gazette*). His poetry is sometimes obscure, through excessive concentration of thought and his delight in elliptical phrasing. But his best work has simplicity and dignity. Here is an extract which shows the freshness of his language and vision :

I think continually of those who were truly great,  
 Who, from the womb, remembered the soul's history  
 Through corridors of light where the hours are suns,  
 Endless and singing. Whose lovely ambition  
 Was that their lips, still touched with fire,  
 Should tell of the Spirit clothed from head to foot in song.  
 And who hoarded from the Spring branches  
 The desires falling across their bodies like blossoms.

One woman poet who has won a place for herself by sensitive writing of both emotion and intellect without obscurantism is Ruth Pitter. Her volume *Urania* is a collected volume of her best work.

## § 15

### MODERN AMERICAN POETS

The foremost twentieth-century poets of America are Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869–1935) and Robert Frost. They both belong to New England, but they are totally unlike each other.

To Robinson the world was "a kind of spiritual kindergarten where millions of bewildered infants are trying to spell 'God' with the wrong

blocks." The mainspring of his verse is pity, and he writes much of failure, believing it to be more interesting than success. A failure is the hero of the poem—*Captain Craig*—which brought him to the notice of Theodore Roosevelt, then President. Roosevelt gave him a post in the Customs, but he soon resigned it and devoted himself entirely to writing. He won the Pulitzer prize three times. He was a traditionalist, much influenced by Tennyson and Browning, though his view of life was very different from theirs. For some of his themes he went back to Arthurian legend. The most ambitious of these poems with a Celtic background is the immense *Tristram*, which had been preceded by *Merlin* and *Lancelot*. Perhaps the best expression of his sad, austere philosophy is to be found in *The Man Who Died Twice* (1927).

Robert Frost (b. 1875) is much less of a visionary; indeed his poems often suggest the practical farmer. He organised his life so well that he was able to combine verse-writing with the management of a farm and lecturing in American colleges. Long before he published his *Collected Poems*—they appeared in England in 1930—his special achievement had been saluted on both sides of the Atlantic; in 1937 came a volume of selected poems. It consisted in an extension of the Wordsworthian theory that poetry should be made of words borrowed from common speech. Frost borrowed his rhythms as well as his diction, so that his poetry is often a heightened form of talk. Yet it is never prosaic or trivial. On the contrary, it has a clear, sharp beauty, born of living contact with the Vermont ploughlands—a "frostiness," to quote a facetious but not inexact description applied to it by an English critic.

If Frost is the quiet voice of New England, Carl Sandburg is the strident voice of Chicago. He caught the rattle and roar of industrial America in *Chicago Poems* (1916) and *Smoke and Steel* (1920). His free verse derives from Whitman, but his energy and vision are his own. Another interpreter of modern America is Vachel Lindsay (1879–1931). He too is fascinated by its noise and colour, and like Sandburg he was impelled to travel up and down the country, preaching his poetic gospel and giving inspired readings of his own poems. His voice was an admirable instrument for his strange music. In *The Congo* (1914) he introduced syncopated sound, and the poem, which is full of Negro influences, has been described as "an infectious blend of rhyme, religion, and ragtime."

The life of the Middle West was mirrored—with satirical distortion—in the series of epitaphs published by Edgar Lee Masters in 1915 under the title of *The Spoon River Anthology*. Some two hundred respected citizens are made to rise from their graves and deliver shameless confessions of their past lives. The poem is said to have been suggested by a copy of *The Greek Anthology* which Masters had received from a friend. In 1924 appeared



a sequel, *The New Spoon River*, recording the changes that had come over the country with the spread of industrialism. Masters died in 1950.

Conrad Aiken was removed from the hurly-burly of American life by his absorption in experiments with "absolute poetry," the aim of which was to achieve the same effect as a musical score. He once explained that in his symphonic pieces he was trying to use emotions as a composer uses notes or chords. He is a master of the long cadence and the most subtly musical of all American poets.

Stephen Vincent Benét's reputation was made by a vigorous narrative poem about the Civil War: *John Brown's Body*, which won a Pulitzer prize in 1929. Though written in a Paris suburb it is thoroughly American in feeling. Its inspiration was Benét's enthusiastic study of Civil War records as a boy and the tradition of devoted patriotism which he inherited from a line of military ancestors.

Modern America is not particularly rich in lyric poets, but there are two who must be mentioned. Towards the end of her life Elinor Wylie (1887-1928) wrote verse illumined by intense spiritual experience. The delicate lyrical note of Edna St. Vincent Millay was first heard in *Renascence* (1917), published while she was still at school. *The Harp-Weaver* (1922) contains a sonnet sequence that has been highly praised. The sonnet was her favourite form. Miss St. Vincent Millay died in 1950.

## § 16

### MODERN DRAMATISTS

The centre of vigorous and original drama has tended to shift in the present century from Scandinavia to America, and no playwright—always excepting George Bernard Shaw—has had a greater influence than Eugene O'Neill, who won the Nobel prize for literature in 1936. O'Neill was born in 1888, the son of a popular actor. He spent an adventurous youth among gold-prospectors, seamen, and beachcombers, and these contacts with low life gave him material for his early plays. He turned dramatist after a breakdown in health in 1912. His reputation was established with *Beyond the Horizon* (1919), and then began a period of restless experiment, during which he produced *The Emperor Jones* (1920), *The Hairy Ape* (1922), *Desire Under the Elms*, *Marco Millions*, *The Great God Brown* (1925), *Lazarus Laughed* (1927), and *Strange Interlude* (1927)—all within eight years. The originality of these plays made him famous all over the world. He scorned theatrical convention and reintroduced devices that had not been used since Greek and Elizabethan times: the mask, the chorus, the soliloquy, the aside, the ghost. His aim was to bring poetry into the theatre without departing from realism, and his imaginative fervour triumphs over the



occasional crudities of his method. Even so, he does not wholly avoid tediousness in *Strange Interlude*, where the characters are made to voice their thoughts, nor in the prolix *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), a sombre presentation of a modern tragedy which parallels the *Oresteia* of Æschylus.

Elmer Rice (b. 1892) found an international public in 1923 with *The Adding Machine*, an expressionistic tragedy about a poor clerk who is supplanted by a robot, goes mad, and murders his employer. In 1929 came *Street Scene*, a cross-section of tenement life in New York. Its atmosphere of impending disaster is characteristic of Rice, and stylistically it is interesting as an attempt to invigorate dramatic method with devices borrowed from Hollywood. *Judgment Day* (1934) added to his reputation. And as a novelist, Elmer Rice is by no means negligible. Marc Connelly joined the experimentalists in 1930 with *The Green Pastures*, which presents a Negro version of the Old Testament in a form reminiscent of the mediæval miracle play.

The influence of O'Neill can be traced in the mature work of Sean O'Casey. He was nurtured, however, in the Abbey Theatre tradition, and he is the outstanding product of the second phase of the Irish national theatre movement started about the turn of the century by Yeats, Lady Gregory, "A.E." and J. M. Synge. When *The Shadow of a Gunman* was produced in 1923 the impetus of the verse play inspired by Celtic legend had long been exhausted. O'Casey's models were Lennox Robinson, Padraic Colum, and T. C. Murray, who had swung the movement from poetry to realism and found their material in the humours and tragedies of modern Irish life. Their aim was to mirror without distorting. Thus, though poetry is implicit in *Juno and the Paycock* (1924), and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), their form is realistic. They were well if stormily received, and their success might have encouraged a lesser dramatist than O'Casey to go on writing in the same vein. But in *The Silver Tassie* (1928) he turned his back on the Abbey Theatre, and the expressionism of its second act emerged fully developed in *Within the Gates* (1933). The atmosphere of O'Casey's tragi-comedies of working-class life is always tense: round the corner is rebellion or revolution. His favourite scene is Dublin, where he was born and brought up. As a child he sold newspapers in its streets. Sean O'Casey has now left Ireland, settled in England, and is writing his autobiography in a series of fascinating volumes.

The British drama of the period was mainly concerned with naturalistic comedy. The most brilliant exponents of this school were Somerset Maugham and Noël Coward. After writing a long series of witty, tightly constructed satiric comedies—the best is probably *The Circle* (1921), though *Our Betters* (1923) runs it very close—Maugham lost faith in the naturalistic theatre and, with *Sheppey* (1933), abandoned it altogether. Coward



(b. 1899) moves between the extremes of *Private Lives* and *Post-Mortem*; the one urbane, and witty the other savagely ironical. He had his greatest literary success as the interpreter of the cynical, disillusioned world of the 'twenties, a success which began in those years with *The Vortex*, but has later been dissipated in the writing of highly remunerative entertainment.

Realistic, but tragic as well as comic, Stanley Houghton wrote at least one first-class full-length play: *Hindle Wakes*. And half a dozen excellent one-acters. Idealistic is the work of Laurence (brother of A. E.) Housman, whose most notable works are *Little Plays of St. Francis*, *A Dramatic Cycle*, the delicious *Prunella* (this in collaboration with Granville-Barker), and a series written round the life of Queen Victoria, *Victoria Regina*.

After making his name in the theatre with *Dangerous Corner* (1932), J. B. Priestley (b. 1894) exploited his flair for sympathetic characterisation in a string of plays about middle-class life, such as *Laburnum Grove*. Then, like Maugham, he tired of naturalism. He did not desert the theatre, however; instead, he turned to experiments with form and sought to stimulate the mind of his public as well as its emotions. The two plays based on the time theories of Dunne and Ouspensky, *Time and the Conways* and *I Have Been Here Before*, show him more interested in ideas than in character. *Johnson over Jordan* (1939) is a philosophical fantasy about death and the hereafter which attempts a synthesis between drama and music and ballet. In *They Came to a City* (1943), Priestley sets forth a trenchant yet idealistic prophecy.

The witty extravaganzas of "James Bridie" (O. H. Mavor, 1888-1951) whose first play, *The Anatomist* (1931), made him famous, led some critics to compare him with Shaw, and there are certainly points of kinship between *A Sleeping Clergyman* (1933) and *The Doctor's Dilemma*. But Bridie lacked Shaw's constructional power; too often his exuberant fancy was undisciplined. Nevertheless, Bridie was an important figure.

The verse drama was taken up from the point where the Irish school had abandoned it and developed along different lines by Lascelles Abercrombie (1881-1938), Gordon Bottomley, and T. S. Eliot. In *The Sale of Saint Thomas* (1930), Abercrombie evolved a new type of dramatic blank verse—essentially poetic but in form almost conversational. Bottomley dispensed with the conventional furniture of the stage and gave all the emphasis to lyric and choric effects; his poetic drama, like his poetry, is impressive and eloquent; moreover, it is instinct with literary—as also with personal—integrity. Eliot's work has already been treated.

From Central Europe came the Wellsian fantasies of the delightfully aseptic and witty Karel Capek (*R.U.R.*, *The Insect Play*, *War with the Newts*), who, born in 1890, died prematurely some fifty years later; the historical reconstructions of Gerhard Hauptmann (see Ch. XXXV), the



heavily psychological dramas of Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931); from Spain the Andalusian comedies of the Quintero Brothers, and the many-sided work of Jacinto Benavente, who, born in 1866, won the Nobel prize in 1922, and the distinguished plays of Sierra; from France the delicate, low-keyed art of Jean-Jacques Bernard, and the far from low-keyed dramatic work of Henry Bernstein (1876-1953); from Italy the intellectual fireworks and edged social commentaries of Luigi Pirandello. Pirandello is perhaps the greatest of them all, though he wrote his first play in 1912 at the age of forty-five, eight years after the appearance of his best-known novel, *The Late Mattia Pascal*. He ranks with Shaw and the two have much in common. His masterpieces are *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921) and *Henry IV* (1922). The latter is a savage piece about a nobleman who goes mad, finds on recovering his reason that the modern world is impossible, and feigns insanity to protect himself. Here, in the words of Walter Starkie, "we see the author snarling his contempt for human society."

## § 17

## MISCELLANEOUS WRITERS

Of the vast contemporary output of travel books, criticism, histories, biographies, and autobiographies, not much is likely to be remembered. Perhaps the biggest single contribution to English literature is T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, privately printed in 1926 and first published in 1935, the year of his death in a motor accident. It is an account, written in a mannered, rhetorical prose that has echoes of the *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (1888), that very great book by Charles Montagu Doughty (1843-1926), of the Turkish revolt in Arabia which he organised and led to success during the last war. Some measure of greatness may be claimed for the oddly original *Old Calabria* (1920) of Norman Douglas (1868-1948), for R. B. Cunninghame Graham's travel sketches of South America and Spain, for W. H. Hudson's autobiographical *Far Away and Long Ago*. Cunninghame Graham, who died in 1936 as the G.O.M. of Scottish literature (he wrote some admirable tales and sketches of Scottish life), was, like T. E. Lawrence, a man of action—even in his writings. Hudson (1841-1922) is commemorated by a bird sanctuary and an Epstein statue in Hyde Park. His place as a naturalist is with Gilbert White and, like Richard Jefferies, he had intense awareness of "the Being that is in clouds and air." Below him—but at some distance—come Henry Williamson and a whole school of country writers, led by H. J. Massingham, who seek to preserve the values of rural culture in defiance of the trend towards urbanisation. Sir Max Beerbohm (1872-1956) will be remembered



as an exquisite and diabolically clever parodist and as a master of the light essay. In criticism, C. E. Montague (1867-1928), Desmond MacCarthy (1878-1952), and Robert Lynd (1879-1951), have carried on the tradition of Hazlitt: Montague was also a distinguished novelist, more appreciated by the educated than by the general public, but as a short-story writer (*Fiery Particles*) he ranks very high indeed. This profound thinker and delectable stylist is of the intellectual *élite*. Then there is the Cambridge School of critics, acute, intellectual, analytical, provocative: its leader, Professor I. A. Richards (*The Principles of Literary Criticism*); chief disciple—yet how independent!—William Empson (*Seven Types of Ambiguity*). To Lytton Strachey (1880-1932) we owe the modern biographical method. Among those influenced by his impressionism were Philip Guedalla and Lord David Cecil. Historical works included Sir Charles Oman's *History of the Peninsular War* (in seven volumes, 1902-1931); H. A. L. Fisher's luminously compact *History of Europe*—his last important work (he died in 1940); G. M. Trevelyan's *England under Queen Anne* and most readable *English Social History*; and Winston Churchill's *Marlborough*.

Philosophic ideas, as we have seen, tended to find expression in novels. But among the influential thinkers of the age there were, of course, men whose philosophy was given to the world unalloyed. George Santayana and Miguel de Unamuno cannot be regarded as novelists, though it is worth noting that their lesser work includes experiments with fiction. Of equal stature as a philosopher is Paul Valéry, who made his reputation as a poet. Santayana, though born in Spain in 1863, writes in English—so well that he can be read for his prose alone. *Soliloquies in England* (1922) reflects his admiration, not uncritical, for the English character and way of life. His philosophy is materialistic, and thus at the opposite pole from Unamuno's, which insists on the spirituality of man. In the work generally regarded as his masterpiece, *The Tragic Sense of Life* (1913), Unamuno broods with Spanish fervour on death, and challenges the rationalist by exaltation of the human soul. He was a modern Don Quixote riding against the goddess of reason. His junior, friend, and upholder, Salvador de Madariaga, scholar, literary critic, and philosopher, is perhaps the most distinguished of all Spanish writers of the post-1920 period. There is none of Unamuno's generous enthusiasm in Valéry. His precise French mind examines the post-war flux with detachment in *Variety* (1924). He is a little disdainful of the common man, from whom he is temperamentally aloof, and he dreams of a reborn Europe in which political power will be held by an oligarchy of intellectuals. But a greater philosopher than Santayana, Unamuno, Valéry, is the Englishman, A. N. Whitehead, whose themes are, for the most part, difficult but whose style is always lucid. Perhaps his most generally readable book is *Adventures of Ideas*.

In his early days he was very closely associated with that other great twentieth-century English philosopher, Bertrand Russell (b. 1872), who is as readable as he is subtle and provocative, whether on metaphysical or on sociological themes.

## READING LIST

### JAMES JOYCE :

*Ulysses* is published by John Lane.

Cape publish *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Dubliners* in the Travellers' Library.

*Finnegan's Wake* is published by Faber.

James Joyce's "*Ulysses*," by Stuart Gilbert (Faber).

*The Essential James Joyce* (Cape).

### DOROTHY RICHARDSON :

*Pilgrimage*, collected edition, 4 vols. (Dent : The Cresset Press).

### D. H. LAWRENCE :

Heinemann publish the works of D. H. Lawrence in a pocket edition, including *The White Peacock* (also in the Everyman's Library), *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, *Aaron's Rod*, *Kangaroo*, *The Boy in the Bush*, *The Plumed Serpent*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and *Poems* (3 vols.). Heinemann also publish Lawrence's *Letters* edited by Aldous Huxley, and an omnibus volume of *Tales*.

*Lady Chatterley's Lover* is now published, unabridged, by Penguin Books. *Stories, Essays and Poems* (Everyman's Library).

*D. H. Lawrence*, by Hugh Kingsmill (Methuen).

*D. H. Lawrence*, by Richard Aldington.

*Son of Woman*, by J. Middleton Murry (Cape, Life and Letters Series).

*The Savage Pilgrimage*, by Catherine Carswell (Secker : Dent).

### VIRGINIA WOOLF :

The Hogarth Press publish the works of Virginia Woolf in a uniform edition, including : *The Voyage Out*, *Night and Day*, *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* (also in the Everyman's Library), *Orlando*, *The Common Reader* (essays), *Flush* (biography).

### E. M. FORSTER :

Edward Arnold publish the novels of E. M. Forster in a uniform edition, including *A Room with a View*, *Howards End*, and *A Passage to India*. Messrs. Arnold also publish *Aspects of the Novel* (criticism), and *Abinger Harvest* (essays).

Sidgwick & Jackson publish three collections of stories, *The Celestial Omnibus*, *The Eternal Moment*, and *Collected Short Stories*.



HUGH WALPOLE :

Macmillan publish the novels of Sir Hugh Walpole in various editions, which include *Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill* (also in the Everyman's Library), *The Prelude to Adventure* (also in the World's Classics), *Fortitude* (also in Nelson Classics), *The Dark Forest*, *The Secret City*, *The Captives*, *The Cathedral*, *The Old Ladies*, *Harmer John*, *Wintersmoon*, *Hans Frost*, *Captain Nicholas*, *The Inquisitor*, *A Prayer for My Son*, *John Cornelius*, and *The Herries Chronicle*. Macmillan also publish *Anthony Trollope* in the English Men of Letters Series.  
*Hugh Walpole*, by Marguerite Steen (Nicholson & Watson).

R. C. HUTCHINSON :

His novels are published by Cassell.

JOHN BUCHAN :

Novels (Hodder & Stoughton ; Nelson). Biographies (Nelson).

COMPTON MACKENZIE :

*Guy and Pauline* (World's Classics), *Carnival*, *Sinister Street*, *Extraordinary Women* (all Secker), *Vestal Fire* (Cassell), *Poor Relations* (Hutchinson).

FRANK SWINNERTON :

Hutchinson publish *Sketch of a Sinner*, *The Georgian House*, *Harvest Comedy*, also *Swinerton : An Autobiography*.

*Nocturne* (World's Classics).

*The Georgian Literary Scene* (Everyman's Library).

J. B. PRIESTLEY :

Heinemann publish the works of J. B. Priestley in various editions.

The standard edition includes : *The Good Companions*, *Angel Pavement* (also in the Everyman's Library), *Adam in Moonshine* and *Benighted*, *Faraway*, *Three Plays and a Preface*, *Self-Selected Essays*.

CHARLES MORGAN :

The novels and volumes of Essays are published by Macmillan.

MARY WEBB :

Cape publish the works of Mary Webb in various editions, which include : *The Golden Arrow*, *Gone to Earth*, *The House in Dormer Forest*, *Precious Bane*, and *Poems*. Also *A Mary Webb Anthology*.

SOMERSET MAUGHAM :

Heinemann publish a collected edition of Somerset Maugham's novels, stories, and travel books, including *Liza of Lambeth*, *Mrs. Craddock*, *Of Human Bondage*, *The Moon and Sixpence*, *The Trembling of a Leaf*, *On a Chinese Screen*, *The Painted Veil*, *Ashenden*, *Cakes and Ale* (also in the Everyman's Library), *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, *First Person Singular*, *The Narrow Corner*, *Ah King*, *Cosmopolitans*, *Theatre*. Also *The Summing-Up* (autobiography).

Heinemann publish the Plays in a uniform edition, 6 vols., with three plays in each.

ALDOUS HUXLEY :

Chatto & Windus publish the works of Aldous Huxley in various editions, including *Crome Yellow*, *Antic Hay*, *Those Barren Leaves*, *Point Counter Point*, *Brave New World*, *Eyeless in Gaza*, *After Many a Summer*, *Grey Eminence*, *Ape and Essence*, *The Olive Tree* (essays), *Texts and Pretexts* (anthology), *The Perennial Philosophy*.  
*Selected Poems* (Blackwell).  
*Stories, Essays and Poems* (Everyman's Library).

RICHARD ALDINGTON :

Heinemann publish a pocket edition including *Death of a Hero*, *The Colonel's Daughter*, *All Men are Enemies*, *Very Heaven*, *Soft Answers* (stories), and *Voltaire* (biography); and his translations.  
 Chatto & Windus publish *Artifex: Sketches and Ideas*.  
*Collected Poems, 1915-23* (Allen & Unwin).  
*Complete Poems* (Wingate).

WYNDHAM LEWIS :

*The Apes of God* (Grayson), *Time and Western Man* (Chatto & Windus), *Autobiography* (Eyre & Spottiswoode).

ERIC LINKLATER :

*Poet's Pub*, *The Men of Ness*, *Juan in America*, *Magnus Merriman* (all Cape).

EVELYN WAUGH :

Chapman & Hall publish a pocket edition including *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies*.

WILLIAM GERHARDI :

*Futility*, *The Polyglots*, *Pending Heaven* (all Duckworth).

JOHN DOS PASSOS :

*Manhattan Transfer*, *The Big Money*, *The 42nd Parallel*, *Nineteen-Nineteen* (all Constable).

THOMAS WOLFE :

*Look Homeward, Angel*, *Of Time and the River* (both Heinemann).

WILLIAM FAULKNER :

*Soldiers' Pay*, *Sanctuary*, *Light in August*, *Pylon*, *Absalom, Absalom!* *The Wild Palms*, *Pylon*, and *Go Down, Moses* (all Chatto & Windus).

LOUIS BROMFIELD :

*The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* (Cape), *Twenty-Four Hours*, *The Rains Came* (both Cassell). Messrs. Cassell also publish an omnibus, *It Takes all Kinds*.

THORNTON WILDER :

*The Cabala*, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, *The Woman of Andros* (all Longmans).



ERNEST HEMINGWAY :

*Men Without Women, A Farewell to Arms, Death in the Afternoon, For Whom the Bell Tolls* (all Cape).

PEARL S. BUCK :

*East Wind : West Wind, The Good Earth, The Mother* (all Methuen).

*The Oxford Book of American Verse*, edited by F. O. Matthiessen. (Oxford University Press).

PAUL HORGAN :

His novels are published by Constable.

JOHN STEINBECK :

Novels published by Heinemann.

JAMES T. FARRELL :

Published by Constable.

*Complete Poems of Robert Frost* (Cape).

ROGER MARTIN DU GARD :

*The Thibaults* (John Lane).

GEORGES DUHAMEL :

*Salavin, The Pasquier Chronicles* (both Dent), and *Light of my Days* (autobiography).

JULES ROMAINS :

*Men of Good Will* (Peter Davies) ; two of his plays, Englished by H. Granville-Barker, are published by Sidgwick & Jackson.

HENRY DE MONTHERLANT :

*Pity for Women, The Lepers* (both Routledge).

FRANÇOIS MAURIAC :

Uniform edition published by Eyre & Spottiswoode.

*French Novelists of To-day*, by Milton H. Stansbury (Oxford).

*Modern German Literature : 1830-1938*, by J. Bithell (Methuen).

*Modern German Short Stories* (World's Classics).

THOMAS MANN :

*Buddenbrooks, The Magic Mountain, Joseph the Provider*, and the other novels (Secker).

FRANZ KAFKA :

*The Castle* (Secker), who also are publishing the important *Diaries*, edited by Max Brod, and *An Interpretation of his Works*, by Herbert Tauber.

IACOB WASSERMANN :

In English (Allen & Unwin).

STEFAN ZWEIG :

In English (Cassell).

Library Sri Pratap College  
Srinagar.

D. PETTOELLO :

*Italian Short Stories* (thirteenth to twentieth centuries), in Everyman's Library.

SIGRID UNDSET :

*Jenny, Kristin Lavransdatter, The Master of Hestviken* (all Cassell).

SELMA LAGERLOF :

*Gösta Berling's Saga* (Cape) ; *Jerusalem, Charlotte Löwensköld* (both Werner Laurie).

F. E. SILLANPÄÄ :

*Meek Heritage, Fallen Asleep While Young* (both Putnam).

KATHERINE MANSFIELD :

Constable publish a standard edition including *Bliss, The Garden party, The Doves' Nest, and Something Childish*. Also the *Journal of Katherine Mansfield, Poems, and Letters*, edited by J. Middleton Murry.

A. E. COPPARD :

Cape publish several volumes of A. E. Coppard's stories, including *Adam and Eve and Pinch Me, Clorinda Walks in Heaven, Fishmongers' Fiddle, and Fares, Please* (omnibus).

H. E. BATES :

Cape publish the novels and stories of H. E. Bates, including *The Two Sisters, Catherine Foster, Day's End, The Fallow Land, The Black Boxer, Thirty Tales, The Poacher, Cut and Come Again, Spella Ho, The Flying Goat, My Uncle Silas*.

Sir H. Milford : *English Short Stories*, 3 vols. (World's Classics). Period covered : nineteenth to twentieth centuries. American authors included. Invaluable for the development of this genre. In the same series is *Modern English Short Stories*, edited by Phyllis M. Jones.

J. C. SQUIRE :

Heinemann publish 2 vols. of *Poems*, also *Sunday Mornings* (essays), and *The Honeysuckle and the Bee* (autobiography).

*Apes and Parrots : Parodies* (Jenkins).

W. J. TURNER :

*Poems, 1916-36* (Oxford).

EDITH SITWELL :

Duckworth publish *Collected Poems* and also the following separate volumes in the New Readers' Library : *Bucolic Comedies, Rustic Elegies, The Sleeping Beauty, Troy Park*. *Song of the Gold* is published by Macmillan, who also publish *The Canticle of the Rose* containing "nearly all the poems Dr. Sitwell wishes to preserve."

Duckworth published *Wheels Anthologies*, 1920.



EDMUND BLUNDEN :

*The Shepherd, English Poems* (both Duckworth).

EDWARD THOMAS :

*Collected Poems* (Faber).

*The Life and Letters of Edward Thomas*, by John Moore (Heinemann).

See also the intimate story of his married life written by Helen Thomas.

*As it Was and World Without End* (Heinemann).

V. SACKVILLE-WEST :

*The Land and All Passion Spent* (both Heinemann).

ROY CAMPBELL :

John Lane publish *The Georgiad, Flowering Reeds, Broken Record*, and *Mithraic Emblems*, and a volume of *Collected Poems*.

*The Flaming Terrapin* (Cape), *Adamastor* (Faber).

T. S. ELIOT :

*Poems, 1909-25, Ash Wednesday, Murder in the Cathedral, The Family Reunion* (all Faber).

*The Sacred Wood* (Methuen), *Selected Essays* (Faber).

*The Achievement of T. S. Eliot*, by F. O. Matthiessen (Oxford).

*A Symposium*. Edited by E. Marsh and Tambimutto (Editions Poetry).

W. H. AUDEN :

*Poems, Look, Stranger, The Orators, The Age of Anxiety Another, Time* (all Faber).

C. DAY LEWIS :

*Collected Poems* (The Hogarth Press).

STEPHEN SPENDER :

*Selected Poems, Trial of a Judge, The Still Centre, Ruins and Visions, World within World* (autobiography) (all Faber).

RUTH PITTER :

Poetry, including *Urania* is published by The Cresset Press.

Faber publish the excellent *Book of Modern Verse*, edited and introduced by Michael Roberts, a comprehensive Anthology of modern poetry.

E. A. ROBINSON :

*Collected Poems* (Macmillan).

ROBERT FROST :

*Collected Poems* (Longmans).

VACHEL LINDSAY :

*Collected Poems* (Macmillan).

EDGAR LEE MASTERS :

*The Spoon River Anthology* (Werner Laurie), *Invisible Landscapes* (Macmillan).

CONRAD AIKEN :

*Landscape West of Eden* (Dent), *Nocturne of Remembered Spring* (Secker : Dent).

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT :

*Ballads and Poems, 1915-30* ; *Burning City* (Heinemann).

EDNA ST. V. MILLAY :

*The Harp-weaver* (Secker), *Fatal Interview : Sonnets* (Hamish Hamilton).

EUGENE O'NEILL :

Cape publish several volumes of O'Neill's plays, including *Beyond the Horizon*, *The Emperor Jones*, *The Hairy Ape*, *Marco Millions*, *The Great God Brown*, *Lazarus Laughed*, *Strange Interlude*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *Ah, Wilderness !* and *Days Without End*.

ELMER RICE :

Gollancz publish *Street Scene*, *See Naples and Die*, and several volumes of plays.

*Plays of To-day*, 3 series (Sidgwick & Jackson) ; English, and mostly of 1910-1922.

SEAN O'CASEY :

Macmillan publish *Five Irish Plays*, *The Shadow of a Gunman*, *Juno and the Paycock*, *The Plough and the Stars*, *The Silver Tassie*, and *Within the Gates*. Also *I Knock at the Door*, and further volumes of the autobiography.

*The Irish Theatre*, edited by Lennox Robinson (Macmillan).

NOËL COWARD :

Heinemann publish most of Noël Coward's plays, including *Cavalcade*, *Private Lives*, and *Post-Mortem*. Also *Present Indicative* (autobiography).

STANLEY HOUGHTON ; LAURENCE HOUSMAN :

Their plays are published by Sidgwick & Jackson.

JAMES BRIDIE :

Constable publish *A Sleeping Clergyman*, *The Anatomist*, *Tobias and the Angel*, and many other plays. Also *One Way of Living* (autobiography).

LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE :

*Four Short Plays* and *The Sale of Saint Thomas* (both Secker : Dent).

His poems are in the Oxford Poets.

GORDON BOTTOMLEY :

Constable publish *King Lear's Wife*, *Vision of Giorgione*, *Lyric Plays*, *Scenes and Plays*, *Choric Plays*, and *Poems of Thirty Years*.



ARTHUR SCHNITZLER :

*Anatol* (A Sequence of Dialogues), paraphrased in English by Harley Granville-Barker, is published by Sidgwick & Jackson. His novels and tales are published by Constable.

KAREL CAPEK :

*R.U.R.* (Oxford) ; *War with the Newts* (Allen & Unwin, who also publish his non-dramatic works).

THE QUINTEROS :

Sidgwick & Jackson publish the plays of the Quintero Brothers, translated by Helen and Harley Granville-Barker.

G. MARTINEZ SIERRA :

Three of his plays, translated by the Granville-Barkers, are published by Sidgwick & Jackson.

*Literature of the Spanish People*, by Gerald Brenan (Cambridge University Press).

J. J. BERNARD :

*The Sulky Fire and Other Plays* (Cape).

LUIGI PIRANDELLO :

Dent publish several collections of Pirandello's plays, including *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *Henry IV*.

T. E. LAWRENCE :

*Seven Pillars of Wisdom* ; and *Letters*, edited by David Garnett (both Cape).

NORMAN DOUGLAS :

*South Wind*, *Old Calabria* (both Secker : Dent).

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM :

*Thirty Tales and Sketches* (Duckworth) ; but most of his works, and *Life* by A. F. Tschiffely, are published by Heinemann.

W. H. HUDSON :

*Far Away and Long Ago* (Everyman's Library), *The Purple Land* (Duckworth) ; complete works (Dent).

HENRY WILLIAMSON :

*Tarka the Otter* (Putnam), *Salar the Salmon*, and *The Phasiac Bird* (Faber).

MAX BEERBOHM :

*A Christmas Garland*, *Seven Men*, *Zuleika Dobson* (all Heinemann), *Works and More* (John Lane).

C. E. MONTAGUE :

*Disenchantment*, *The Right Place*, *Dramatic Values*, *A Writer's Notes on His Trade* (all Chatto & Windus, who also publish his works of fiction, and a *Life* by Oliver Elton).

DESMOND MACCARTHY :

*Portraits*, *Criticism*, *Experience*, *Drama* (all Putnam).

ROBERT LYND :

*Books and Authors* (Cape), *Selected Essays* (Dent), *The Art of Letters* (Duckworth).

I. A. RICHARDS :

Most of his books are published by Routledge.

WILLIAM EMPSON :

*Seven Types of Ambiguity* (Chatto & Windus).

LYTTON STRACHEY :

*Books and Characters, Eminent Victorians, Portraits in Miniature* (all Chatto & Windus).

PHILIP GUEDALLA :

*The Second Empire, Palmerston, The Queen and Mr. Gladstone, The Duke* (all Hodder & Stoughton).

LORD DAVID CECIL :

*The Stricken Deer, The Young Melbourne, Two Quick Lives* (Constable).

SIR CHARLES OMAN :

*History of the Peninsular War* (Oxford University Press).

H. A. L. FISHER :

*A History of Europe* (Arnold).

G. M. TREVELYAN :

*England Under Queen Anne, A History of England*, and the excellent and immensely popular *English Social History* (Longmans).

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL :

*The World Crisis* (Thornton Butterworth), *Marlborough : His Life and Times* (Harrap), *Lord Randolph Churchill* (Grey Walls Press and Odhams). *History of the Second World War* (Cassell).

GEORGE SANTAYANA :

His various books are published by Constable.

*Little Essays drawn from the Writings of George Santayana*, edited by Logan Pearsall Smith (Constable).

PAUL VALÉRY :

*Eupalinos* (Oxford).

MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO :

*The Tragic Sense of Life* (Macmillan).

A most informative book exemplifying and dealing with the trend of Spanish prose during the approximate period, 1898-1930, is *The Spanish Omnibus*, edited and translated by Warre B. Wells (Eyre & Spottiswoode).

A. N. WHITEHEAD :

His works are published by the Cambridge University Press. Notable books are : *Adventures of Ideas, The Concept of Nature, Nature and*



*Life, The Principles of Natural Knowledge, Process and Reality, Religion in the Making, Science and the Modern World.*

BERTRAND RUSSELL :

In the Home University Library is his one popularisation : *Problems of Philosophy*.

Allen & Unwin publish most of his other books ; of these we may note : *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy, The Principles of Mathematics, An Outline of Philosophy, Mysticism and Logic, The Scientific Outlook, Marriage and Morals, Power : A New Social Analysis, The Conquest of Happiness, On Education.*

The following anthologies are recommended :

*An Anthology of Modern Poetry* (Methuen). Likewise published by Methuen, W. H. Auden and L. A. G. Strong's anthology of English verse of 1900-1940.

*Twentieth Century Poetry*, edited by Harold Monroe (Chatto & Windus).

*New Paths on Helicon*, edited by Sir Henry Newbolt (Nelson).

*The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, edited by W. B. Yeats.

*The Faber Book of Modern Verse*, edited by Michael Roberts.

*The Oxford Book of American Verse*, edited by Bliss Carman (1861-1929), himself a fine poet—a Canadian.

*Modern American Poets*, edited by Conrad Aiken (Secker : Dent).

Nelson's Modern Anthologies : *Fiction*, ed. Frank Swinnerton ; *Poetry*, ed. Robert Lynd ; *Drama*, ed. S. R. Littlewood ; *Biography*, ed. Lord David Cecil ; *Travel*, ed. H. M. Tomlinson. Both Longmans and Harrap publish several excellent collections of modern English essays.

Consult also *English Literature between the Wars*, by Ivor Evans (Methuen) ; *Literature of England*, by W. J. Entwistle and Eric Gillett (Longmans) ; and also the *Concise Cambridge History of Literature*.

## XLI

### LITERATURE SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

#### § I

RECENT years have seen the acceleration of one tendency in the life of mankind which may prove to be as revolutionary in the affairs of our race as anything we have hitherto known. Man has become, under the duress of events, a political animal. Hitherto politics have played a part in the life of the individual, but he could choose to some extent how great that part should be. In earlier centuries the mass of people could play no active rôle, and usually remained uninformed of the course of events in the world of political power until those events affected their lives and fortunes. With the rise of the first effective democracies and the spread of education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries politics became theoretically all men's business. But life in the Anglo-Saxon and European civilisations which dominated the world remained fundamentally an affair of the individual and of the family group. Literature reflected this. The novel, the play, poetry, the essay, were all based on the assumption of personal relationships and personal reactions, and our whole cultural life accepted this premise.

Two world wars, the rise of world Communism with its concomitant of the totalitarian state, the counterblast of Fascism and Nazism, the tremendous spread of newspaper reading, the coming of radio with its hour-to-hour record of world events, of the cinema, and later of television showing the outstanding ones: all these things have changed the whole vortex of our living. We remain individuals, but with a new realisation that the expression and functioning of our individualities depend upon vast political forces outside ourselves which, by strange paradox, depend for their power upon our individual opinions, wills, and political actions. When Gilbert wrote that

Every little boy or girl who comes into this world alive  
Is either a little liberal, or else a young conservative.

he was exercising stage licence; but to-day it is almost literally true that every person, through conviction or through nationality, is a consciously political partisan of some sort.



This, too, inevitably has its reflection in contemporary literature. One effect of it is that the novel—depending as it did mainly upon the conflicts and relationships of individuals—has suddenly declined, and where it exists accepts the new terms of reference to group conflict. Meantime the political book, and particularly the record of great political events with the ultimate culmination in war, has taken its place. It is not without significance that Winston Churchill's volumes of War History were a world's best-seller, and commanded a higher price than was ever given before for an author's work, albeit the author—good writer though he be as his biography of his famous ancestor Marlborough bears witness—is not a professional writer. If the novel has survived it has had to become itself partisan and group conscious, and the most successful works have been those which concerned themselves with the paramount struggle for power in some phase or other. Poetry also became political. Between the two wars the poets, as we have seen, tended to turn towards the left wing, and, with the idealism of their kind, to believe that there was arising a new hope for mankind in the triumph of Communism.

Even drama, which by its very nature and the limitations of the stage can talk best in terms of the individual, flirted with the wider themes and with manners of presenting them which would release it from personalities. In Central Europe in particular the so-called expressionist drama and dramatists endeavoured to portray in symbols the vast forces at work in the world. Ernst Toller with *Masse Mensch* (Mass Mankind); George Kaiser with *Gas* and *The Machine Wreckers*; Capek with *R.U.R.* and *The Insect Play* were outstanding examples. Meantime the Russian Theatre, lured by the promise of an economic Utopia as the result of the great electrification schemes, produced plays, ballets and even stage *décor* which glorified the machine as such. Eventually, however, the conditions of the stage, at least in the western democracies, drove the drama back to the tragedy and comedy of individuals.

One other element in this situation which cannot be disregarded was the spread of the doctrine of totalitarian state rule and the domination of every aspect of the life of the individual by the State—a reversal of the nineteenth-century doctrine of individualism and *laissez-faire*. The rise of Fascism in Italy and of Nazism in Germany as counter measures to the Bolshevik triumph in Russia paradoxically was accompanied by exactly the same doctrine of State censorship of literature, and in all countries which fell under the spell of totalitarianism all forms of art had to accept the theory that the purpose of art, as of all else, was to subserve the State as represented by the ruling régime.

Propaganda, however, especially dictated propaganda, seldom results in great creative work, though there is an element of propaganda inspired



by personal enthusiasm or indignation in half the literary masterpieces of the world from Euripides castigating Athens in *The Trojan Women* to Shaw preaching from the stage of the modern theatre. Russia, it is true, has produced a vast mass of literature since the Revolution, and some of it is noteworthy, but it is all too often ruined by a childish insistence that all proletarians are good and all their opponents bad. Italy under Mussolini and Germany under Hitler appear to have inspired little literature worthy the name. Most of the finest of the German writers were driven out by the Nazis and continued to function abroad. One outstanding novelist who remained was Hans Fallada whose *Wolf among Wolves* gave a terrible picture of Germany just before the rise of Hitler as an apologia for that event. But as Professor Gilbert Waterhouse says in his *Short History of German Literature* :

The Germany of Adolf Hitler sought its philosophy in those writers whose hysterical patriotism had evolved the idea of a superior Nordic or Aryan race, a German *Herrenvolk* (master race) and an inferior and exhausted Latin race of which France was the type. . . . The test of merit, even of survival value in Germany became this : are the subject-matter and opinions expressed suitable to the authority of the totalitarian State ? The question is not new, nor is the spirit of intolerance new that puts it. It has been put throughout the centuries by similar authority. . . . It has been withstood throughout the centuries by men of courage and integrity . . . and it must be withstood again to-day if truth and freedom are to survive.

Since this was written (in 1942) the same problem has been posed again from the other side of the struggle. The communists by their basic philosophy of dialectical materialism believe that all history is an unending struggle between rival groups for that economic power which will give the winner in each phase of it control over the resources of the world. They believe that this struggle has now moved to one between the proletariat, on the one hand, and the capitalists with their supporters, on the other. They hold that the course of history indicates that the proletarian is the new and forthcoming dominant and—what is to our purpose here in considering the effect of all this on contemporary literature—that art, literature, plays and films and even music have as their absolute purpose the creation in men's minds of a receptivity of the new order and the jettisoning of the old. That is not only their purpose ; it is their sole purpose, says this doctrine. Hence the one thing not to be tolerated in an artist, writer, musician or critic is that he should create confusion in the mind of the people by getting his values "wrong," i.e. anti-proletarian. Since literature especially is to educate the masses the whole function of it is limited to what is called "Socialist realism" : that is, the putting forward of the ideals and individuals and historical events of the coming



of the socialist state in terms of absolute black and white. Everybody and every action working for it is heroic and noble ; every thing and person opposed to it, or even indifferent to it, is villainous.

In the communist countries one cannot contract out of this basic stipulation. Art for art's sake ; the personal concerns of individuals *qua* individuals ; the concern with form and style : all these things are as much taboo as direct criticism of the régime. From time to time, and especially during the period of the Second World War when Russia was allied to the West, a certain relaxation towards western bourgeois ideas was tolerated. But immediately the schism between the two systems became apparent again a series of purges of working artists, writers and critics showing any tolerance took place in Russia. They were first reprimanded, and then, if they did not alter their ways, were simply stopped writing—a matter of perfect ease in a country where all the papers and all publishing is tightly controlled by the State.

We in the West gasp with horror at this intolerance and lack of freedom for minorities. The communists, for their part, are equally horrified at the idea of permitting anybody to retard the progress of their system which they believe will abolish war, poverty and all economic ills. Like the Early Christians (with whose rise and domination of the world of their day this struggle has a certain loose parallel) they hold that "whosoever is not for us is against us." There is no place for compromise or indifference. Those of us who by upbringing and predilection stand in the middle of the road and are neither right nor left naturally find ourselves in opposition to this spiritual intolerance whether exercised by a police state of the East or by some Committee of un-American activity in the West. We hope for a peaceful evolution of mankind through the welfare state to an ultimate equitable economic life enriched by "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience," to use Milton's magnificent phrase. But our hopes and fears are no part of this OUTLINE where these political issues are only mentioned because they are the great determining forces in the literature of the world to-day, and are likely to continue so for many decades.

In face of this it will be seen that the strictures of Professor Waterhouse upon the literary dictatorship of the Nazis in Germany under Hitler apply with equal force to communist theory and practice, even though Communism may appear on a long-term policy to have greater justification than the power politics of the Fascist-Nazi grouping.

It has been withstood by men of culture and integrity, and it must be withstood again if truth and freedom are to survive.

In pursuance of that creed an anti-Nazi literature appeared before and during the war years, and an anti-communist one is being created. It is



interesting to note, in this respect, that such writers as André Malraux of France, Arthur Koestler of Britain, and Ignazio Silone of Italy, all of whom were noteworthy exponents of the anti-fascist and pro-communist viewpoint in early writings, are now to be numbered among the fierce opponents of Communism. Malraux may be studied as a typical example of this change. An airman on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War, he turned to the novel of political action, his greatest book probably being the study of the Chinese Revolution, *La Condition Humaine*, which has been translated as *Man's Estate*. It is placed in Shanghai in the spring of 1927, is concerned with the doings of the communist intellectuals, but is, however, the picture of a whole community in the struggle for power. There is in it perhaps just a hint of the tragic overview of life reminiscent of Dostoevsky.

"It is only very rarely that man is able to enjoy man's estate," says one of the characters. "One starts out on the road to vengeance, and one meets life on the way."

Malraux from the attitude and communistic affinity of such an early book is now counted as a Gaullist in contemporary France. Such a change of attitude is true of many other writers, including Ignazio Silone whose novel *And He Did Hide Himself* was an outstanding anti-fascist work.

Apart from these writings inspired by a definite political philosophy, a wide body of literature has come into being which is an instinctive counterblast to the creeds of political writing of any kind. Catholicism and its philosophical cousin, mysticism, have captivated many of the novelists and poets: Aldous Huxley, Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, even Charles Morgan, can be considered as of this camp in the department of the novel; and in English poetry that leader of the moderns, T. S. Eliot. A host of writers in France, both creative and philosophical, bear witness to the strength of this movement for other-worldliness. Along with this must be considered the most distinctive of all trends of recent years: existentialism. In this dual aspect of the revival of Christian mysticism in the works of the Danish writer Kierkegaard and Gabriel Marcel of France, and in the atheistic one of Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Jean Anouilh of France, and Heidegger and Jaspers in Germany, it stands for the doctrine of absolute individualism. Another strong individualistic writer is Herbert Read whose philosophic anarchism has made him as an art critic the chief exponent of modernist painting.

Naturally alongside these extreme trends western European literature and its counterpart in the Anglo-Saxon world has continued along its traditional lines of approximate realism, depicting the experiences of the individual in the world of his time, using the sensitized imagination of the



artist to create characters and their environment, and reflecting the great issues of to-day or the past in terms of the comedy and tragedy of personal living.

## § 2

## NOVELS AND NOVELISTS

Writers who have emerged since the beginning of the Second World War include Elizabeth Bowen, an Irishwoman whose delicate pictures of Ireland, London, and Paris have won for her many admirers, Pamela Hansford Johnson, who continues the normal type of writing which we associate with successful English women novelists, Graham Greene, Nevil Shute, Joyce Cary, C. P. Snow, Lawrence Durrell and Angus Wilson.

Graham Greene is a Catholic, and writes fundamentally about sin and guilt, like Aldous Huxley, with such powerful preoccupation with ugliness and wickedness that his work has an element of decadence. His attitude is chiefly one of: if you will persist in evil this is the way evil will get hold of you. But beneath this is the Catholic sense of the possibility of salvation by faith rather than by works. *The Power and the Glory*, one of his first books, dealt with the life of a priest flying from place to place and performing his priestly functions despite the communist persecution in Mexico. He was drunken and sensual, cowardly and beastly, and so were the communities he served so faithfully; but there was an underlying sense of God and therefore of grandeur behind the brutality. The story in *Brighton Rock* is equally sordid. The milieu is that of a racecourse gang with a boy of seventeen trying to be its boss. It is in its way a thriller, but not a mere gangster story. It is absolutely appalling, but powerful; and the relationship of the girl who loves the "hero," the repercussion of her goodness upon him is marvellously drawn. *The Heart of the Matter* is a later book of the same type, with the same utterly degraded chief character and the same basic idea of the cankering effect of sin. The books of Graham Greene, even his short stories, are often filmed, and one wonders whether the probability of filming (with its rich rewards) is a danger to the purely literary quality of his work. This is an element which must be taken into consideration with all the literary work of our period when its influence, even subconsciously, may be operating upon any writer. The films are the enemy of meditative and descriptive writing; on the other hand they may make for economy and for a dramatic sense of situation.

Aldous Huxley himself has continued along his self-appointed path of the Jeremiad, and his novel, *Ape and Essence*, continues the theme of *After Many a Summer*, wherein an aristocrat given an enormously increased span of life merely perists in sensuousness until he ends as a sub-human creature. In the later book it is the whole human race who carry through an atomic war and end with a social pattern chiefly concerned with orgies of lust and sadism under a totalitarian régime—all this described by the writer with a gusto which has caused responsible critics to rise in rebuke. Like Swift before him Huxley seems to hate the human race. His work is intended as a warning in the vein of his *Brave New World*, but is marred by this intrinsic hatred of his kind. In a philosophical book, *The Perennial Philosophy*, an annotated anthology of Eastern mysticism, he shows to better advantage, but is really at his best with such a semi-historical study as *Grey Eminence*, where the struggle between the author's faith in world renunciation and his despair of the blight of power politics are centred upon one historical character in seventeenth-century France. His erudition throughout his books is amazing, though often a little unbalanced as he is led aside by some new scientific theory or fact.

Along this path of the modern jeremiad—a type of book amply justified by the times in which we live and inevitably resulting from them—mention might be made of the work of George Orwell whose satire of totalitarianism under the title *Animal Farm* was a noteworthy book, and whose *Nineteen-Eighty-four* touches the lowest point of depression in predicting the immediate future of the human race under power politics. The early death of Orwell was a great loss to contemporary literature.

Evelyn Waugh is a Catholic writer. He is a brilliant satirist, and if he holds something of the same philosophy of other-worldiness as Huxley or Greene he uses the solvent of satire to achieve his ends.

A far more artistically conscious novelist and essayist was Charles Morgan. He, too, had a mystical philosophy which gave depth to his writing, the rare novel, and the series of essays he contributed to *The Times Literary Supplement* during the war years under the title *Menander's Mirror*. He was a fine and conscious stylist, but not an easy one, and because of the care taken in writing, his work appeared at long intervals. *The Judge's Story* or *The River Line* may not have the solidity of much earlier work, such as *The Voyage* or *Sparkenbroke*, but their author probably contributed the most considerable writing to the contemporary English novel in the years preceding his death.

Joyce Cary (1888–1957) slowly built a reputation as one of the significant novelists of our time. Born in Donegal, Ireland, of Anglo-Irish stock, he was successively an art student in Paris, a sociologist in Ireland, a civil administrator and magistrate in a remote part of Nigeria, with intervals of



the first of which, *Aissa Saved*, was published in 1930. His greatest achievement is a trilogy written around a feckless Bohemian modernist artist, Gulley Jimson, his mistress Sara, and her employer, Wilcher. *The Horse's Mouth*, Gulley Jimson's monologue on life, or *Herself Surprised*, that of Sara, reveals that Cary has the novelist's supreme power of getting inside his characters. Among his later books is another trilogy of first person narratives written around a politician and dealing with his favourite theme of integrity.

Angus Wilson's novels and short stories show a highly developed power of dissection that has earned him, with some, a cynic's reputation. But in his understanding of the mingling of kindness and cruelty in human actions there is often a sensitive compassion. Critics give him a foremost place among contemporary novelists.

C. P. Snow is a novelist who carries on the quietist family-chronicle tradition with an enormous series of books recording in careful detail and with subtlety and insight the emotional and other happenings to his own hero, Lewis Eliot. His protagonist is a civil servant, and the series, *Brothers and Strangers*, planned to cover ten or eleven books, gives an excellent picture of life in that world set in the wider environment of contemporary society.

William Golding is another comparative newcomer to the field of fiction who has stepped into the best-seller class with the approval of the critics.

Somerset Maugham has written his brilliant autobiography, *The Summing Up*, in which he has bidden farewell to creative work (we hope it will prove a prima-donna's farewell), but he has followed this with another best-selling novel in his usual vein, *Catalina*. Compton Mackenzie carries on in his characteristic way, but without the flash of genius which gave us *Sinister Street*. Priestley is strangely silent, caught up in the immediately practical work of being a farmer. And many promising women novelists produce nothing outstanding though their work remains most true to the old basis of fiction writing in that they are concerned with the interrelationship of individuals. There is, of course, an unending flow of steady workmanlike fiction, much of it very worthy, for the level in this department is high, and if it falls short of enduring greatness, if there is now no Wells, Galsworthy, Bennett, Conrad, or even Walpole, it may be that the times are not good for the novel as they left it.

Recent years have produced a number of novels concerned primarily with the morals of a shifting modern industrial society. John Braine and Alan Sillitoe, Kingsley Amis and John Wain: they all write dramatic, colourful stories about people—particularly young men—adrift in a society where one set of social classes is rapidly giving way to another. Whether they want to get into the system or to stay out of it, these men end up by

conforming, and the battle for integrity has been lost. Or has it been won? The books end with a question mark.

Since the last war we have witnessed a change in the whole focus of the English novel. Production costs and television have precipitated the rise of the paperback; illustrated animal stories, thrillers, and novels of known sex interest are best sellers. The serious novelist of to-day has all this to compete with, as well as the increasing reluctance of publishers to experiment in new names.

One other relevant aspect has been the change of taste of the Americans, namely, their tendency to publish only a few novels which by publicity boosting achieve a vast circulation. These may be literature worthy of such treatment, or they may not: their claim is that they sell, and this naturally does little good to less spectacular work. Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* may have begun this; it certainly encouraged it. A story of Civil War days, it was a *tour de force* of invention, had a deal of power, and showed real research into period. Its heroine, Scarlett O'Hara, alas, set a kind of fashion in American publishing and reading circles for heroines of more beauty than morals. Henceforth "hussy" literature (with large-scale film possibilities) became the vogue.

Modern America, however, is by no means deficient in novelists of real literary quality. Carson McCullers (b. 1918) is a symbolic writer who gives the widest human significance to characters with underdeveloped minds, particularly children. Saul Bellow (b. 1915) has written a profound modern picaresque novel, *The Adventures of Augie March*. J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* has captured the imagination of the European reading public for its convincing and sympathetic penetration into the world of the adolescent.

### § 3

#### EXISTENTIALISM

The one outstanding "ism" which has affected the literary world in the war and post-war years is the many-sided doctrine of existentialism. In fact it is not new, but its acceptance is; and its disciples, especially in France, are building new novels, new dramas and essays on its difficult creed.

The origin of existentialism is generally accredited to the Danish writer Kierkegaard, of whom mention has been made in Chapter XXXV (p. 684). In his own day he was known chiefly as a Christian philosopher who rather bitterly attacked the Church for its lack of Christianity, and in another direction as the exponent of a difficult philosophy *Either... Or*, in which the matter of choice played a great part. Actually he was a man who, facing



sternly the basic ideas which the world of his day pretended to accept, found in the great crises of his life in love and religion that these beliefs did not serve him. Thereupon he revolted from both classical philosophy, and from the current version of the Christian one, seeking a truth which would answer his own personality and his own experiences. "Truth is subjective" was Kierkegaard's cry. Furthermore, he argued that the kind of person who made that subjective truth, and the kind of truth which would operate in one's life was created by the choices, great and small, which continually moulded the individual life. He, as a Christian, believed that the laws of God operated, and urged that choice should be made according to the revelation of these, but realised that there was no certainty of anything more than his own existence and his own change.

The war situation in such a country as France under the German occupation gave a new meaning to this philosophy of choice; but in the world of the twentieth century the positive beliefs of Kierkegaard's day were not operating. God, progress, evolution, democracy: two world wars and the dire results of revolution had made men of integrity doubt. Nevertheless, there never had been a time when the individual was more violently called upon to make decisions. Voltaire, faced by his doubt of all solutions, had run away from philosophy and advocated the wisdom of cultivating one's garden, *i.e.* of getting on with something practical and leaving abstract questions alone. In the conditions of the occupied countries such a retreat into the quietude of personal life was itself a choice: a tacit collaboration with the invaders. Revolt probably meant death, torture, or at best a life of incredible danger and anxiety. For what? The intellectual aristocrat had no answer. He did not believe in God, in country, in democracy, in mankind, in progress, nor in anything which would give unquestioned sense to martyrdom or even discomfort. In his personal relationships the situation was equally indefinite: love, economic security, morality, all the signposts were down. Yet he had to make a choice, a thousand choices; and the kind of choice he made was important *when it had been made* because it created the conditions, internal and external, which would operate next.

If all this were not the basis for security of thought or certainty of action it was at least the foundation for dramatic conflict and for the study of character, the twin elements out of which literature is made. Thereupon existentialism, whatever its merits as a philosophy, became a dynamic in creative writing. This is no place to examine the mass of metaphysical and abstract philosophical works written upon the subject. Heidegger of Germany wrote of it at its most abstract. The Christian mystic, Gabriel Marcel of France, nearer to Kierkegaard's own position, was its advocate in terms of Christian belief.



Jean Paul Sartre, the accepted literary leader of the school accepts no hypothesis other than the necessity of choosing and the result of choice as the creative factor in new situations and a new person to meet them. Not very consistently he accepts a morality of liberty "as if" it exists, and "as if" it would be good if it did. So in such novels as *The Reprieve*, a study of the choice at Munich, or in such plays as *Huis Clos* in which after death the personal business of choosing in sex relationships is seen in the retrospect of memory, Sartre expounds this philosophy of anguish and near despair. He paints life and people surviving, existing, and continuing to make their meaningless and absurd choices on the new low level of European society just before, during, and after the war. Nothing justifies or sanctifies the choice made, the action taken. It is ridiculous but necessary under the terms of our existence to go on making deliberate choices, and to continue to do things if we would give any meaning at all to our situation as creatures thrown into a world we did not choose.

The same sort of point is made in the plays of Jean Anouilh, but he has a greater sense of theatre. *Antigone* is typical of existentialist drama. In it the situation outlined by Sophocles when Antigone defies the tyrant Cleon by burying the body of her brother and paying the inevitable price of death, which in its turn brings consequences of ruin to the whole royal household, is treated as a perfect existentialist situation. In an ultra-modern technique, where the stage manager strolls on to the stage continuously and acts as chorus, Anouilh demolishes every sensible reason why Antigone should act as she does. Nevertheless she persists; Cleon persists; and death and ruin spread. There is a kind of meaning and dignity given to life by the mere willingness to act according to a principle which has lost its validity. M. Anouilh has treated *Medea* and *Romeo and Juliet* in the same vein. In other plays a modern situation poses the problem of choice.

Albert Camus, the novelist, is also claimed as an adherent of this doctrine. His great novel, *The Plague*, the story of a plague descending upon and decimating a city and the reaction of the individuals as life under the horror becomes more and more meaningless and impossible is another example of how the doctrine works. The whole life of the city is made the theme of the book, and its links with existentialism are clear. It has reportage in common with Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* but its symbolic application to our time is apparent.

Existentialism is more than a fashionable intellectual idea, to be played with by lively minds: it is a philosophy born out of the anguish of our time and the emptiness due to our lost and shattered faiths.



## § 4

## RECENT CONTINENTAL WRITING

The unsettled state of Europe during and since the Second World War has meant that little new work of real importance has emerged, but, as in England, some reputations of earlier authors have been enormously enhanced. Kafka's *The Castle*, already enjoying a high place, has been exalted to the position of a classic largely by the publication of the revealing *Diaries*. It is well to remember that Kafka did not write his *Diaries* for publication (and that he left instructions that his two unfinished novels were to be burnt, but the instructions were happily not obeyed). Therefore, we have a comparatively uninhibited revelation of the writer; and the theorists, chiefly the psychoanalysts, have been busy. There is already a literature about Kafka much greater than the author's work.

The publication of the *Journals* of André Gide have had much the same effect. There has been an English edition of the whole of Gide's works and, again, an enormous mass of writing "about it and about." Gide may safely be said to be the greatest influence on French literature of our time. Born in 1869, he wrote continuously from 1891 until his death in 1951. His *Les Cahiers d'André Walter* published anonymously, proclaimed the rise of a new figure in French literature. His novels, dramas, criticism, and the books in new forms which almost defy classification, kept him at the forefront both as a creator and an analyst of contemporary creative writing. He at times appeared to be linking himself with some movement only to shock its adherents shortly by some act of apostacy. "It is good to follow your penchant provided you go upward," he said, and his literary career evidenced the doctrine, and that other: "To free oneself is nothing; it is being free which is hard." Gide studied every form of freedom and its difficulties, for his novels and other writings are concerned deeply with the contradictions which govern our lives: the spirit and the flesh, the individual and society, classic restraint and romantic self-expression, God and the Devil. The *Journals* have thrown light on his continually changing mentality, and have sent readers again to the vast body of his work.

The leading French novelist of these later years has been François Mauriac (1885- ). He was born in Bordeaux and has written most of his books on that city or the locality. He is an ardent Catholic, and is concerned with the inevitable results of sin and selfishness. His Christianity is mystical, and works on the plane of the spirit, not on that of social reform or political action. His first works belong to the days immediately following



the First World War ; but as book after book followed, his stature became apparent. *The Desert of Love*, *Thérèse*, and *Viper's Tangle* are among the best of his many works. He has also written plays, biographies and essays. He was awarded the Nobel prize in 1952.

A more varied novelist and a more exciting personality is André Malraux (1901- ) whom we have already mentioned. He has had a career as eventful as anything imagined or portrayed in his books, and is a profound exponent of the life of revolutionary action. An Oriental scholar he went East on an archaeological expedition, became involved in Far Eastern politics, an associate secretary-general of the Koumingtang, a member of the Committee of Twelve with Chiang Kai-Shek, and a propaganda commissioner. Out of all this his first novels about the revolution in Shanghai came and won for him the Goncourt prize. He then continued his archaeology in Persia and Afghanistan where he made important discoveries ; thence went to the Arabian desert where he discovered the royal city of the Queen of Sheba ; returned to France and worked as an anti-fascist ; went to Spain in 1936 and organised an air corps against Franco, and became wounded. From this came his Spanish book, *Days of Hope* (1938). When war came he went into a tank corps, was captured by the Germans, escaped, and actively worked with the partisans, whence came *Les Noyers de l'Altenburg* (1943). So he continues his active life as writer and worker for the human spirit, and his position as an ardent Gaullist is perfectly in keeping with this apostle of revolution.

There was during the war a certain amount of " underground " writing, but little of it was sufficiently important to make an eventual mark on literature despite the splendour of its spirit and the courage which marked its production and circulation. One exception was the short French story by a writer who called himself " Vercors, " who was really Jean Bruller, a well-known cartoonist, and who wrote a perfect study of life under the occupation, *Silence de la Mer*, which was translated into English under the title of *Put out the Light*. Its quality of subtlety and its theme reminds one of John Steinbeck's *The Moon is Down*, which dealt with the situation under the strain of the occupation in a northern country. Another piece of very brief literature which gained a war-time and after-war reputation was Paul Gallico's *Snow Goose*, a more sentimental story, but something of a prose poem. Gallico continues to write highly popular short novels in the same vein.

One reputation which has established itself in recent years is that of the brilliant Spanish poet and dramatist, F. Garcia Lorca (1899-1936), a left-wing writer who was killed by Franco partisans at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. He was accepted alike by the intelligentsia and by the people as a poet and dramatist. His book *Gipsy Romances* (1928) firmly



established him ; his plays and his work for the Spanish theatre marked him a man of the people ; while such volumes as *Lament for the Death of a Bullfighter* towards the end of his short life spoke for the whole of Spain. His best-known play, *Blood Wedding*, contains some of his finest work.

Another poet whose importance has become increasingly recognised is Rainer Maria Rilke. Born in Prague in 1875, he died in 1926. He was one of the most deliberate of poets, a symbolist whose words and images often have many meanings, an æsthete who consecrated himself to a life of art. For a time he acted as secretary-companion to Rodin the sculptor. He is not an easy poet to read, but translations of his work by J. B. Leishman and Stephen Spender have proved that even in translation his work is of the stuff of pure poetry. *Requiem*, *The Duinese Elegies* and *The Notebook of Malte Laurids Brigge*, as well as other volumes of the poems have been accompanied by a mass of critical writing on this poet of European culture.

Stefan George (1868-1933) of Germany and Paul Valéry (1871-1948) of France are two other symbolist poets whose reputations have risen as we recognise what pioneers of a new spirit both were. Valéry is an abstract poet, interested to express in richly sensuous symbols and images an idealism so thorough that he deems all action a falling off of the perfection of the thought which prompts it. It may have been this doctrine which caused him from 1896 until 1913 to cease to write. Then at the instigation of Gide he recommenced, and in 1917 published *La Jeune Parque*, a poem as difficult as any in the French language. Rapidly Valéry was accepted as a leader among French poets. *Le Cimetière Marin* is perhaps his greatest poem, and in the final verses of that he gives us the key to this philosophy of idealism. It is significant that Valéry's first book was a study of Leonardo da Vinci, that brilliant Renaissance mind which, like his own, could scarcely bear the trammels of material and action, but was perfectly at home in an empyrean of his own creating.

Jules Supervielle, novelist and poet, is gaining an international reputation with such novels as *Surviver* and with his unforced, impressionist poetry. With him stands the more emphatic Pierre Emmanuel who has been called "the Victor Hugo of the Resistance," his work a curious coming together of religion and political feeling which strikes a note of renewed affirmation in France. Such work by a young man follows into our own day the paths opened by such a Catholic poet as Paul Claudel who remains a force in French poetry.

German literature has shown no such revival as that of the expressionists which followed the First World War. Most of her writers had fled from the Nazi régime. Some had died : Stefan Zweig, great biographer, dramatist, poet, and novelist, that "good European" born in Austria and devoting his life for culture, had committed suicide ; and Ernst Toller,



communist idealist and pacifist, had also died by his own hand. Thomas Mann rose to even greater eminence after he left Germany in 1933. First in Switzerland he continued the three further volumes of studies of Joseph, using the Jewish patriarch as a symbol of the individual whose life was consecrated to social service and human good. Migrating again to America in 1938 he became the world voice of exiled Germans, though he angered certain of his own countrymen by the sharpness of his criticism of the Teutonic mentality. His *Dr. Faustus* (1949) is itself a symbolic examination of the German soul in health and disease. His German composer, Leverkuehn, sells himself to the Devil in return for genius. Diseased and pathological he is set in contrast to his bourgeois friend Serenus Zeitblom, scholar, humanist, classicist, and man of the world. The book showed that Mann had lost none of his power of leisurely and subtle analysis; it ranks with the Joseph tetralogy and with *The Magic Mountain*. Like all Mann's work, however, it has itself some slight taint of decadence and disease.

An important figure in German poetry and drama was Bertold Brecht (1898-1956). Brecht was one of the expressionist poets of the 1920's, who turned to the theatre during that exciting era of German drama. There was a note of decadence and a morbid preoccupation with decay in this early work, but with it a universality linking man with the cycles of nature in the world. "*Baal*" was his first outstanding poem-play, a picture of this sensual god-man walking the earth "soaked in brandy and poetry." The songs from it constituted his first volume of poetry, *Hauspostille*. His finest play of this period was *Mann ist Mann*. In 1927 he became a Marxist and began to write propagandist plays, so that with the rise of the Nazis he became an exile in 1933, living in Scandinavia and America. After the war he went to Switzerland and in 1949 returned to East Germany, settling in East Berlin as an advanced theatre director and attaining acclaim not only in the countries behind the iron curtain but in the Western democracies as well. The visit of his theatre to London in 1956 was an outstanding event. His fervid Marxism, expressed in such plays as *Mother Courage* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, took the view that for a Communist there was only one virtue, to be an obedient communist, to sacrifice one's individualism to the cause. Nevertheless Brecht himself always kept the door open to the West and had his considerable earnings paid into a Swiss bank, even from East Berlin. The experimental nature of his theatre company with its daring non-realistic staging; the fluidity of his creations, ready to borrow from every literary source—including in his *Three-Penny Opera* a version of Gay's *Beggar's Opera* made palatable to communist audiences; the genius of a theatre man who understood the art of entertainment: all went to make this man who had once written a poem about himself as "Poor



B.B." a world-famed impresario and a considerable playwright. *Mother Courage*, his epic-drama of a woman camp-follower in the Thirty Years War is probably his finest work.

Italy has given us an outstanding novelist in Ignazio Silone (1900- ) whose anti-fascist novels and satirical essays have achieved world success. He and his brother edited a labour paper in Trieste until it was suppressed by the Fascists, his brother arrested and beaten to death and he forced to go into hiding. At first he was a Communist, then he broke with the party in 1930. He escaped from Italy and took refuge in Switzerland, but returned to his native country as soon as the Fascist régime was broken. Silone professes an ideal socialism based on a fundamental ethic and in his novels *Bread and Wine* (1936) and *The Seed beneath the Snow* (1942) his protagonist Pietro Spina returns from exile to Italy and faces the realities of humble living in the south which he loves. An earlier novel, *Fontamara* (1933) had a greater success, being soon translated into seventeen languages, but it is not so compelling as the saga of Pietro Spina which poses the whole Italian, and indeed the whole human problem of right social and individual living in a world impoverished by war and torn by factions lusty for power.

That may well be the place where we can leave European literature for the present. Much of it, as we have seen, is inevitably marked by politics and has to be set against a political background. Most of it seeks a way of life in our bewildered time. And the fundamentalism and human sanity of Silone's conclusion may well be a portent of the way literature will move.

## § 5

### BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

One phenomenon of recent literature has been the rise of true-life stories in response to an enormous demand for these. It is as though our times have themselves supplied so much melodrama and truth stranger than fiction that fiction itself has faded into lesser significance, and the reading public have turned to the fact of personal record. As a result almost every character of our own time and all others has received its volume, and all too many people have been induced to put into print what they would wish to be known as the story of their own lives. That biography and autobiography can be brilliant literature there can be no doubt, and the success of Lytton Strachey's debunking method inaugurated a new kind of ruthlessness and an insistence on style in the story telling which established a vogue for this type of writing. The immediate pre-war years were notorious too for the iconoclastic treatment of Victorian idols. Along with this the French writer, André Maurois, set another new note



in his semi-imaginative treatment of Shelley under the title *Ariel*, and followed this by studies of Byron, Disraeli and others. In the years between the wars biography of these and other kinds rose to almost first place, at least quantitatively, in our publishing, and autobiography shared the *réclame*.

It produced many outstanding if dissimilar books, for how can we compare Dr. Axel Munthe's *Story of San Michele* (1929) which became a world-wide best-seller, with, say, Wells's *Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a very Ordinary Man*; or Robert Graves's *Good-bye to all That* (1929) with E. F. Benson's *Final Edition: an Informal Autobiography*, published in 1940, just before the death of the author who ten years before had given us that first delightful chapter of his life history and that of the times, *As we Were*. Many authors who had achieved their reputations in other fields succumbed to the prevailing fashion and wrote either the whole or a fragment of their life stories. Priestley, for instance, in his two books, *Midnight on the Desert* and *Rain upon Godshill* wrote meditatively of his experiences and his thoughts during hours in Arizona and the Isle of Wight, and Hugh Walpole in *Roman Fountain* of a visit to Rome during the papal election. To these must be added Shaw's *Sixteen Self Sketches*, which, although the author used his genius to continue his lifelong creation of the Shaw mythology, yet reveal something of the life and environment of this foremost of world authors. It is as we would expect, a brilliant and provoking series of studies, and showed that the writer had lost none of his cunning even though his ninetieth birthday was well behind him. Another Irish dramatist whose autobiography has been appearing in a number of serial volumes is Séan O'Casey, his story told in that impressionist manner we associate with one of the founders of the biographical vogue, his fellow-countryman, George Moore, who was something of a pioneer of the new spirit in autobiography with the publication of his series *Hail and Farewell* and *Memoirs of my Dead Life* in the first decade of the century.

One of the most detailed and delightful of these serial life stories is that of Sir Osbert Sitwell, who in *Left Hand, Right Hand*, *The Scarlet Tree*, *Great Morning*, and *Laughter in the Next Room* has given us a detailed picture of the English life of this century seen through the eyes of an aristocrat whose family group stood at the centre of the world of culture in the days between the wars. His pictures of his eccentric father, Sir George, are among the noteworthy things of contemporary literature.

C. V. Wedgwood has taken a very prominent place among historical biographers, her *William the Silent* being outstanding.

So much good biography and autobiography has been written, however, during these years and with it many excellent records of war adventure, that it becomes understandable that fiction has been felt to be rather less



exciting and relevant than truth. The one book which has topped all others as a world best-seller, Churchill's record of the war, is itself a highly personal work, for during those years history and Churchill were indistinguishable. Sir Winston has followed this with a *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, a popular rather than a scholarly record relating Britain, America, and the Commonwealth.

## § 6

One of the most interesting personalities in English literature during the post-war period was the poet-dramatist, Dylan Thomas. Actually he was Welsh, having been born in Swansea in 1914. He died when he was only 39 years old, in New York in 1953, during one of his visits to the United States where, as in Britain, he achieved an enormous success as a broadcaster and public reader of his own work. Unhappily his success and acclaim were vitiated by his social failure as an alcoholic, though those who knew him well record the charm of his personality despite this failing.

There is in Dylan Thomas's work a tremendous intensity and a tragic sense of life warmed by sympathy and eventually by humour. His passion for words for their own sake and sound can lead him to obscurity and verbose meaninglessness. The thunderous alliterative roll of his verses causes the reader (and even more the hearer, for happily his own renderings have been recorded) to accept it by the ear alone, as we do Swinburne. Only if we analyse it for strict sense do we begin to question its value. When the poet himself recited this intoxicating stuff in his vibrant organ voice, with all the stops out and the full courage of his own known music, any audience was liable to be swept off its base of sound judgment. This accounted in no small degree for his position as a poet in two continents. To hear Dylan Thomas read *And Death shall have no Dominion* was almost a physical experience.

And Death shall have no dominion.  
Dead men naked they shall be one  
With the man in the wind and the west moon ;  
When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone,  
They shall have stars at elbow and feet ;  
Though they go mad they shall be sane,  
Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again ;  
Though lovers be lost love shall not ;  
And Death shall have no dominion.

Even this, though one of the least obscure of Dylan Thomas's poems, is, on analysis, rhetoric.

His poems were revised by him and republished in one collection in 1952. Then came the resounding success of *Under Milk Wood*, written as a play for broadcasting and subsequently turned into a stage play with a brilliant modernist production. This work does the thing he could do best of all and which he essayed in some of his prose sketches: it presents the characters of a tiny Welsh seaside village, living, loving, hating, praising, drinking, drabbing. The mood is overloaded with the ugliness of squalid wickedness and physical looseness. Nevertheless there is pity and understanding of his fellows, a castigation of meanness of spirit alongside a toleration of bad behaviour, even a beauty of the acceptance of life in all its phases. The language is that of a poet, not of a realist, albeit he does not shirk reality. His words often startle by their metaphors and novelty, as when he calls the dark streets "Bible-black." His prose writings included *Early one Morning*, a series of sketches and essays, and the autobiographical *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* (the echo of James Joyce is revealing as one of his sources). Despite his faults Dylan Thomas possesses a quality which gives him an important place in modern literature.

## § 7

One interesting phenomenon of literature since 1950 has been the success of some books of real life adventure and semi-scientific works written with imagination for a non-scientific audience. One was *The Kon Tiki Expedition* by the Norwegian anthropologist Thor Heyerdahl. This also is basically a scientific book, for the plan to cross the four thousand miles of the Pacific on a Balsa wood raft using only one sail and driving before the prevailing wind was undertaken to prove a theory that the primitive South American people thus came to Polynesia. With five intrepid companions Heyerdahl essayed the voyage, proved his theory at the risk of their lives, and recorded the adventure in his book. The clear descriptive writing, the marvellous subject-matter created a classic. Translated from language to language, it became a best-seller and one of the most discussed books of the world. Not the least element in its success was the sense of human courage and endurance which appealed to the idealism of a period otherwise tempted to cynicism. The primitive contact with nature of these men whose raft at ocean level gave new revelation of the oceanic world was another factor.

A similar unexpected success came to Jacquetta Hawkes for her book, *A Land*. This was again scientific, for she wrote also as an anthropologist and archaeologist the story of the interrelationship of the actual land structure of Britain to its people throughout pre-history and history. Again



the fine quality of the writing and its appeal to the imagination brought the book into fame and made it literature.

Another of these books may owe a little to the impetus of the other two. Rachel Carson, an American writer, wrote *The Sea Around Us*. It presented the wonder of the sea and its paramount influence upon human history in a manner which yet again gave it a deservedly foremost place for it stirs the imagination alike by subject and style.

In a period where the novel—despite the steady flow of competent work on a high level—continues in the doldrums to some extent; when little new has arisen in poetry, biography (save the publication of the Boswell discoveries from the past), belles-lettres, or drama, it is interesting that these scientific books should take a place so high.

New departures in drama since the war have caused much controversy. We have witnessed the coming to the English theatre of the poetic dramas of Christopher Fry. These to some extent follow on the line opened up by T. S. Eliot with the success of *Murder in the Cathedral*, for Fry also is basically a religious writer with a philosophy to express. It was, however, his rich sense of word pattern which, despite its confusion, attracted the intellectuals. In *The Lady's Not for Burning*, a mediæval piece with a modernist discussion of the values of living or dying, we had Fry at his best. After that in lighter work such as *Venus Observed* the word-play and the philosophy were less in evidence; and it was with *A Sleep of Prisoners* which was acted in churches rather than in the theatre, that the original depths were touched. Fry suffers still from the obscurity of modern writing—echoes of Eliot, of Joyce, a certain deliberate mystification—but these very qualities make him acceptable to the highbrows and the literary critics. His following and reputation ensure him production, and he initiated his theatrical career with excellent fortune in actors and producers.

The first exponent of the new school of drama was Samuel Beckett, whose symbolic play, *Waiting for Godot*, presents two tramps at the roadside awaiting the coming of a mystic personage whose appearance will give some meaning to life otherwise filled with mere distractions. A piece with little action and tantalising hints of hidden meanings, this play has been much discussed. Beckett wrote specially for broadcasting *All that Fall* in the same vein of inconclusive and inconsequent pessimism; and his subsequent plays are in this mood.

Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* is less obscure: an old tramp manages to get himself employed as a caretaker by two brothers and congratulates himself on finding a home. The brothers turn out to be mad, and the tramp is forced to return to his wandering, because man can have no contact with life except as a wanderer through it. As in *Waiting for Godot*, it is the staging and language for their own sakes that are exciting.

John Osborne's first play, *Look Back in Anger*, caught the public imagination concerning so-called "angry young men" who, rising in the social scale by virtue of their education, find themselves de-classed and frustrated. *Luther* is splendid theatre and a full-blooded, earthy portrait of one of the most famous of all rebels.

Osborne shares his earthiness with Arnold Wesker, another of the so-called "Kitchen Sink" dramatists. Wesker underlines the rootlessness of modern civilised society and the inability of political creeds to cope with it. It is curious that this drama of the "working class" should have a following that is almost entirely intellectual, and it will be interesting to see where Wesker goes from here.

It is evidence of the revived interest in this poetic and literary drama that it invariably appears in book form and is widely read; this despite the rising costs of book production which militate so greatly against the novel, poetry, and other forms of creative literature. That economic factor, severe enough upon the established writer, is proving disastrous to the introduction of new talent.

## READING LIST

- Graham Greene's novels are published by Heineman.  
 George Orwell : *Animal Farm* is now in Penguin.  
 Charles Morgan : Novels and Essays (Macmillan).  
 Anouilh's Plays, *Ring round the Moon*, etc. (Methuen).  
 Joyce Cary's novels are published by Michael Joseph; some are in Penguin.  
 Albert Camus : *The Plague* (Hamish Hamilton).  
 André Gide (Secker & Warburg).  
 François Mauriac (Eyre & Spottiswoode).  
 Osbert Sitwell and Edith Sitwell are published by Macmillan.  
 Dylan Thomas : *Collected Poems, Under Milk Wood*, etc. (Dent).  
 Thor Heyerdahl's *The Kon Tiki Expedition* (Allen & Unwin).  
 Jacquetta Hawkes *A Land* (Cresset Press).  
 Jack Isaacs : *Twentieth Century Literature*, an estimate of the modernist movement based on Broadcast Talks, is published by Secker & Warburg.  
 Arnold Wesker's plays are now available in a Penguin edition.  
 Angus Wilson : *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, etc. (Secker & Warburg).  
 Lawrence Durrell : *Justine*, etc. (Faber).



## LITERATURE AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

AS we have already indicated, the doctrines inherent in the great social experiment inaugurated by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and continuing through its varying phases in Russia and the group of countries which have come under Russian domination, have introduced into the world a new rigid conception of the whole purpose of literature. This is no place to discuss the moral, spiritual, or even social implications of this purpose and the means used for its establishment, but only to record the history of writing and writers in Russia inasmuch as these have a claim by artistic or other importance in such an OUTLINE as this.

It would be almost true to say that Russian literature has been in some degree revolutionary from its late beginnings (for there is nothing of importance before a time well into the eighteenth century when the work of Peter the Great began to take effect in making Russia a modern European State). The great Russian novelists of the nineteenth century—her finest contribution to world literature—were invariably revolutionaries taking part in deliberate revolts, suffering exile, working and writing for the release of the serfs, sometimes dying for their work for liberty and freedom. Her poets, too, were marked by the same passion. Russia has long been a land of tyranny and its child, revolution.

From a world standpoint her literature can hardly be said truly to begin before the throwing back of the Napoleonic armies in 1812, and the subsequent contacts with France and the West brought many of the aristocratic intelligentsia as army officers or otherwise into contact with the romantic literature of England and France. Poetry, in particular, found an emphasis, very largely from Byron, and between 1820 and 1840 there came the golden age of Russian poetry with Pushkin and Lermontov as its foremost figures. After that poetry declined throughout the nineteenth century whilst the great prose of the novels was paramount, though Nekràsov and Fet wrote fine poetry during this period. From early in the new century until just after the beginning of the new régime, *i.e.* from *circa* 1905 to 1922, there was a revival of Russian poetry by the writers influenced by symbolism, cultivating a highly æsthetic idea of the purpose of literature. And since then Soviet writing has had its dominance. This last period itself divides into recognisable periods with which we will deal duly.



First let us look back to the beginning of last century and pay tribute to that greatest of all Russian poets, the truly world figure of Alexander Pushkin, now the hero of Soviet adoration whose 150th anniversary has been celebrated with great acclaim.

Pushkin was born in 1799, the son of well-off parents. He went to the Academy at Tsarskoe Seló, and, as Russian writers seem apt to do, led a wild tempestuous life as a youth and young man. Eventually he entered State service, but almost immediately involved himself in trouble by writing political epigrams and an *Ode to Freedom*. He was removed from the centre of things and travelled south, was given a post under the Governor of Bessarabia, wrote scathingly of his new chief, and was banished in 1824 to his mother's estate near Pskov. This probably saved him from being too closely connected with the abortive December Rising of 1825, which cost the ringleaders (among them the revolutionary poet Ryleyev (1795-1826)) their lives. The emperor, Nicholas I, however, took a liking to Pushkin and brought him back to Petersburg, gave him a position at court, and kept an eye on any excesses in his writing. In 1831 Pushkin married a society beauty and a few years later, in 1837, when his wife's flirtations involved her with a certain Baron d'Anthes, he fought a duel in which he was fatally wounded.

This Byronic character gave to Russian poetry its finest contribution. His work was characteristic of Russian poetry at its best in the effortless perfection of its form and style, wedded to a realism which always keeps its feet on the earth. Says Prince Mirsky, one of the finest critics of Russian literature, "The general effect of Pushkin's realism on Russian culture can hardly be exaggerated"; and the word invariably applied to his writing is "precision." Influenced by Byron himself, by Walter Scott and by Shakespeare, Pushkin had a fluency and a truth to life and nature typically Russian. His metrical novel, *Eugene Onegin*, the epic *The Gypsies*, the drama, *Boris Gudonov*, the magnificent poem, *The Bronze Horseman*, the prose of *The Captain's Daughter* or of *The Queen of Spades*, *Tsar Saltan* with its folk-tale affinities, the matchless lyrics: everything he did was marked by his own individuality and perfect power over his medium. It is easy to understand that the contemporary régime has seen in Pushkin and his writings the ideal which they can accept and assimilate into their socialist realism. In such a poem, for instance, as *The Bronze Horseman*, he tells the story of the ill-fate of an unimportant clerk with a maximum of feeling and pity for the man, yet with idealism symbolised by the figure of Peter the Great, the bronze horseman, whose grandiose plans could take no account of such happenings to the individual. It is probably the most powerful poem in all Russian literature, and might have been written by any loyal member of the Writers' Union of the U.S.S.R.



The younger contemporary of Pushkin, Michael Yurievitch Lermontov (1814-1841), follows a life pattern very like that of his master. His parents were not rich, but a wealthy grandmother took the youth and gave him the opportunity to lead the life of the dissipated young men of the time. At Moscow University he took full advantage of this opportunity, but, again, alongside the "bright young things" was a fervent idealist full of libertarian enthusiasm. The ode he wrote on Pushkin's death was so full of these sentiments that he was banished to the Caucasus, although it put him in the forefront of the literature of the time. He was forgiven, returned to Petersburg, but on a subsequent visit to the Caucasus made love to the lady of a former school friend, and was so outrageous in his behaviour that a duel resulted in which he was killed. This young man, who thus died when he was but twenty-seven, left a fine body of lyrical poetry; at least two long poetic romances, *The Demon*, telling the story of a demon in love with a beautiful girl, and *The Novice*, a mystical romance full of exquisite nature touches; and, equally important, *A Hero of Our Times*, a semi-autobiographical novel dealing with the dual nature of its hero, Pechórin, and having claim to be the beginning of the Russian analytical novel.

Names in poetry from then until approximately the end of the century need not greatly concern us; though there were many writers, prose and the drama linked with prose utterly overshadowed them. Fedor Tyutchev (1803-1873) was a nature poet, but his ambassadorial tasks took him abroad throughout a large part of his life and he is not typical of the Russian spirit. More so is Nicholay Nekrasov (1821-1878), son of a small squire, whose own sufferings as an impoverished student gave him lifelong sympathy with the poor and downtrodden, though he himself subsequently became wealthy. His chief poem was *Who can be happy and free in Russia?* an apologia for the simple, honest peasant put into the framework of seven moujiks who set forth to discover whether a landowner, a priest, an official, a minister, or the tsar himself is most to be envied. Of another nature is Afanasi Fet (1820-1892), a prosperous landowner, a lover of the arts, and a lyricist of considerable power. In a sense he was Nekrasov's rival; and the literary criticism then and now, concerned with the proletarian content of poetry, had little use for the art for art's sake of this wealthy writer.

The next phase was that of the symbolists who, beginning towards the end of the century, reached a height of pure artistic and personal expression during the first years of the twentieth. They have their vortex in that publication, *The World of Art*, founded in 1898 by Diaghilev before he consecrated himself entirely to the ballet. Dmitry Merezhkovsky and his wife Zinaida Hippus were leaders of this group, but eventually his novels, attempting a new synthesis of the Greek spirit and the Christian, in particular *Julian the Apostate* and *The Forerunner*, a study of Leonardo



da Vinci, proved that his *métier* was prose rather than poetry. The philosophy of Dostoevsky and that of Nietzsche greatly influenced them. Fedor Sologub, I. A. Bunin, Andrey Byely and others were exponents of this school of poets with its markedly foreign influence and its turning away for a time from the revolutionary—the “civic,” as Russian criticism named the earlier socialist tendency.

One important name emerged from this symbolist period and carried over into that of the Soviets: Alexander Blok (1880–1921). He began as a pure symbolist and first made a reputation with *Concerning a Beautiful Woman*, the title covering at once a conception of the eternal feminine and some intellectual ideal of Divine Wisdom. That was in 1905. His next important work, *The Stranger*, brought him fame both in its first form as a poem and then as a drama. It was typical Russian literature, romantic yet realistic and full of irony. Written before the break up of the old Russia it predicted the disasters inevitable to that world of an effete aristocracy and a proletariat repressed by tyranny. *Danse Macabre* followed: its title indicates the same theme, and then in 1913, *The Artist*. When the Bolsheviks took power in 1917 Blok was one of the enthusiastic upholders of the new order, and his next great work, *The Twelve*, still written in the economic symbolism he had made his own, tells of the Revolution under the image of twelve guardsmen roaming the streets in a blizzard, and finishes with a mystical picture of the Risen Christ from Whose presence a mangy cur slinks away into the night and the storm. *The Scythians*, which followed, castigated the Western democracies for not joining in the revolution and making a “people’s peace.” Blok was the hailed poet of the early days of the Soviet triumph, but he himself saw that all was not well with the new régime of which he had hoped so much and so idealistically; and his final work was full of gloom and despair, even though he died when the Revolution was but four years old. He is the one figure of modern Russian literature which can claim world importance.

The first years of the Revolution, however, caused some ferment in the literature of revolt. Byely, using hard concrete images under a doctrine of “Futurism”; Mayakovsky, the editor of a paper, *Lef*, which asserted the new literary values and who was himself a kind of literary loud-speaker specialising in open-air-meeting poetry of propaganda and declamation; Esenin, a mystical peasant symbolist, a kind of Chagall in poetry, who called himself “the last poet of the village,” but drank himself to utter misery in the town cafés far from the nature which he extolled, and finally committed suicide in despair when he was only thirty: these were outstanding.

In prose, Alexei Tolstoy (1882–1945), as playwright of some dramas on Ivan the Terrible, and as novelist whose great novel, *The Road to Calvary*, is a splendid achievement, was accepted by the Soviet writers as a leader,



and when he died there was a great lying-in-state and the establishment of suitable memorials. Another playwright was Leonid Andreyev (1871-1919), but he was the writer of the despair and nihilism which followed the 1905 revolution, and although he became immensely popular and experimented with new forms of play, he would hardly have proved acceptable to the new order.

After the war there were no great names. George Reavey, apologist for the Russian ideal, in his book, *Soviet Literature To-day*, says frankly at the beginning :

“The Soviet literature of to-day reveals no outstanding figures as had graced Russian literature in the past.”

Against that there is an enormous ferment, but creation is probably handicapped hopelessly by the insistence upon absolute doctrinal loyalty and the domination of the Writers' Union which wields power on behalf of the State.

Since the establishment of the régime there have been four steps in this process. First, from 1918 to 1922, came the tussle between the old literature and the new “Proletcult” with its acceptance of the revolutionary principle, and its extolling of the new order. Secondly, from 1922 to 1928, came that period of Reconstruction, when there was no longer need of militant Communism and the State turned to building up its social and cultural life. There were still a number of non-communist “Fellow Travellers” (the term was invented then and on that side of the ideological hedge), but most of those who were out of harmony with the régime, even to a small degree, had become *émigrés*. This period was marked by the rebirth of the novel, largely one depicting the war or revolutionary days or the life under the Soviets. Thirdly, from 1929 to 1932, came the Five Year Plan, and all writing was canalised to this end. The titles of books indicate the fundamental urge : *Speed Up, Power*, etc. Important in these years was the fact that Maxim Gorki, who had at first lived abroad, then visited Russia intermittently, returned finally, and under the direct inspiration of Stalin himself, became virtually dictator of literature. There was a struggle between various proletarian organisations for paramount power, and at last the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers became all-powerful and eliminated all opposition, finally establishing the Writers' Union of the U.S.S.R. This is an absolutely dictatorial organisation linked with the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, and it is so organised that every possible activity of literature comes under its wing.

Everything has thus to subserve the official doctrine of “Socialist Realism,” *i.e.* it must possess Socialist content, nationalist form and be realistic in its representation. Also it must be written for the understanding



and to mould the thinking of the masses, many of whom are still bordering on illiteracy although the Soviets have made truly marvellous progress in removing this old bugbear of the Russian people.

It will be seen, therefore, that from our Western viewpoint freedom to write is non-existent, but that the Russians themselves deem this of no importance in balance against the creation of a world according to their ideals.

## § 2

This absolutism in literature persisted throughout the whole of the Stalinist regime, and any name which emerged, such as that of Ilya Ehrenburg, could only do so if it were associated with the official Party line. Such writers were, in all probability, genuinely convinced that thus and only thus should society function. If their creative power was sufficient the work produced within these limits could be both sincere and good. There were rich rewards, for the Government controlled all publications and book publishing, and believed in the function of the writer as part of the conditioning machinery. Not the least important factor in the regime was the fact that everybody was taught to read, and this was a real revolution within the revolution.

With the death of Stalin and the decision in high places to relax some control—largely to provide a safety valve for the by then explosive urge of the students and intellectuals—a new situation immediately created itself. It is noteworthy that Ehrenburg's own novel *The Thaw* published in the spring of 1954 was clearly an anticipation of the situation, for this was an anti-Stalinist allegory. It was eagerly accepted as such, and almost gave a name to the new movement. Literature took a line of criticism of officialdom which would have been unthinkable before. It utilised the rich material of injustice and knavery in power; and the millions of readers who were aware of such things seized upon these new books. Cautious authors spoke in allegories, but they were easily understood. Others frankly told stories of corrupt Party Bosses, such as Panova's *Seasons of the Year* which revealed the exploitation of the housing shortage in a provincial town. All this was permissible, and was published by the new regime, under the justification that these injustices and villainies were removed as soon as they were exposed to the higher officials, and that anyway they were part of the badness of the discredited Stalinist period. But the long enforced silence was broken. The enormous literature of what was now universally called "The Thaw" is in itself a vast chapter of Russian Revolutionary literature.

The publication in 1956 as a serial in the journal *Novi Mir* of a novel



called *Not by Bread Alone* by the Soviet writer Dudintsev proved the culmination of this movement. It told the story of an inventor, and his tussle as an individual against the vast machine of the State which is used by his rival Avdiev. Avdiev has the official backing of the science group, the Ministry, and of the industrialist Drosdov. Throughout the book this Drosdov speaks convincingly enough for the ant-hill mentality of the bureaucracy and those who have accepted and established themselves under the regime, while Lopatkin, the lonely inventor, speaks for the individual and the genius. Nadia, Drosdov's wife, leaves him and sides with Lopatkin, and through years of suffering, imprisonment, injustice, these two at last attain to the acceptance of the lonely individual's rights. This novel became a rallying ground of the new libertarian ideas. The students and intelligentsia held meetings in the universities and elsewhere to acclaim it; the names Drosdov and Lopatkin passed into the language.

Boris Pasternak's novel, *Dr. Zhivago*, is probably one of the great novels of the century, and dominates contemporary Russian literature. In it the revolution is described for the first time in human terms and not just as a political triumph, and it forms a panoramic survey, on the scale of *War and Peace*, of the revolutionary period. *Dr. Zhivago* won its author the Nobel Prize for Literature in the West and utter rejection in the Soviet Union. Pasternak's name was vilified in Russia, he was expelled from the Writers' Union, and his friend Mrs. Ivinskaya and her daughter were put in prison. It is hard to believe that this sacrifice of creative art to political totalitarianism can be necessary: the outlook, which brightened momentarily with the Thaw, is bleak again.

## READING LIST

*Soviet Literature*, an anthology by George Reavey (Lindsay Drummond).

*Soviet Literature To-day*, by George Reavey (Lindsay Drummond).

One of the best books from a sympathetic viewpoint. A Russian Literature Library by the same publishers contains many good titles, including the poetry and prose of Pasternak.

*Russian Poems*, translated, with Notes, by C. Fillingham Coxwell (Daniel).

*Russian Literature*, by Janko Lavrin (Benn's Sixpenny Library).

*Anthology of Russian Literature*, 2 vols., by Leo Wiener (Putnam's).

*Pushkin*: many editions of Pushkin's works are now available.

*Blok: The Twelve*, translated by C. E. Bechhofer (Chatto & Windus).

*Prince Mirsky: Modern Russian Literature* (Oxford University Press), takes the broad view.

## XLIII

### LITERATURE IN THE COMMONWEALTH

#### § I

##### AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

IT is the fate of the newer lands that their intensity of life which should be the subject of literature makes it impossible to have either the leisure or the conditions which produce the literature itself. Australia suffers in this way. At first thought we name only one or two outstanding writers ; the woman novelist who wrote under the name of Henry Handel Richardson, and the ballad poet, Adam Lindsay Gordon, who has a memorial in the poets' corner of Westminster Abbey. We may remember, too, that the great scholar and translator of Greek plays, Gilbert Murray, O.M., was Australian born, and that W. J. Turner, one of the finest of the Georgian poets, and Jack Lindsay, whose contemporary writings show such wide scholarship, were all natives of Australia. But these have so definitely made England their home and matured their work in England that they can hardly be claimed as Australian writers.

Nevertheless, it were well to realise that there is a tradition and a vigorous native school of novelists and poets in Australia itself, some reflecting the culture of Europe and others developing the mode of their own great country with its vigorous life of the bush country and the gold mine as well as its more sophisticated existence in the fine new cities.

One interesting factor has been the comparatively large amount of poetry as compared with fiction, and the prevalence of the short story compared with the novel. This perhaps reflects the economics of publishing in the continent, for whereas there have been few publishing houses to cater for the small reading public (many of whom would naturally look to Britain for their books and culture generally), the best newspapers have filled the gap by a willingness to publish creative work within these shorter limits. So from the beginning there were poets. Barron Field in 1816, a judge of the Supreme Court, published his *First Fruits of Australian Poetry*, and William Charles Wentworth, in 1823, submitted for a Cambridge literary prize a poem, *Australasia*, which was published in Australia's first newspaper, *The Sydney Gazette*.



Charles Harpur (1817-1868) was the first poet of any real worth, and though he began with an echo of our own romantic poets the scene of Australia gradually conquered. Henry Clarence Kendall (1841-1882) is the next name of real power. He was Australian born and his poetry is full of the local colour. *Leaves from an Australian Forest* and *Songs from the Mountains* were the authentic thing, and it was well that *The Athenæum*, then one of the most fastidious of English reviews, gave the poet praise and published his work. He was followed by Adam Lindsay Gordon, most famous but certainly not the best of Australian poets. Born in the Azores, educated in England, living the life of a steeplechaser in Australia, invariably in debt, often ill and melancholic, so that finally he took his own life at the age of thirty-seven, Gordon wrote the kind of ballad poetry which was almost bound to be popular. He was the friend and protégé of Kendall, who wrote eulogistically of his poetry. To-day it is rather out of vogue, though in 1934 a bust of the poet was unveiled in Westminster Abbey. *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes* (1870) is his most typical work, full of the rhythm of horses galloping, and the excitement of the rider's life. His *Rhyme of Joyous Garde* is Gordon at his most typical: rushing, easy to the ear, popular in its sentiment, and slightly facile, but with passion and power nevertheless.

Henry Lawson (1867-1922) was another of the ballad poets who depicted Australian life. These ballads were encouraged by such newspapers as *The Sydney Bulletin*, whose "Red Page" during the 'nineties was able to encourage both the ballad and the short story. Lawson achieved distinction in both these forms. Andrew Barton Paterson (1864-1921) who wrote under the pseudonym "The Banjo" was another famous balladist, and probably the most typical.

Towards the end of the century the poetry of Australia grew in sophistication, and the turn was marked by the eminence of a group of considerable poets. Bernard O'Dowd, "poet of the new democracy"; Mary Gilmore, Australia's earliest woman poet (her volume, *The Passionate Heart*, published in 1918, contains lovely things); Judith Wright, who is thought by many to be the representative woman poet, writing, as she does, of love from the feminine point of view; the lyrical poets, Hugh McCrae, sensuous and passionate with a great sense of verbal magic, and Shaw Neilson, a delicate and lyrical poet despite his rough life as bush labourer.

Bernard O'Dowd (1866- ) was at first a sociological writer but eventually, especially in two long pieces, one of the Australian landscape and life, the other a rhapsody to Love and Life, he came to full stature.

He was followed by Christopher John Brennan (1871-1933), author of *The Wanderer*, a deeply introspective poem. Brennan is being increasingly recognised as one of the finest of Australian poets.



These have been followed by a great number of younger writers, most of them with their eyes upon the European and American poets of the time. Outstanding is R. D. Fitzgerald, a disciple of Brennan, whose *Moonlight Acre* showed his quality as a poet. Kenneth Slessor, poet of the Second World War and the author of *One Hundred Poems*, is a more modernist writer, and has a considerable following for his ironical and ultra-sophisticated writings. Among the younger poets there is to-day an interesting group which believes that it should turn back to fundamental Australian sources. It bears the fascinating name of "Jindyworobaks." This group holds that even the figures of speech and the images of Australian poetry should belong to Australia, and they turn particularly to the culture of the Aborigines. Another ultra-modern set calls itself "The Angry Penguins"; and yet another, "Barjoi," who publish a magazine of their own. All this betokens a lively interest in poetry which speaks well for the cultural alertness of one section of the dominion.

In the department of the novel Australia had little of any account before Marcus Clarke (1846-1881), whose chief work was a study of the penal settlements, *For the Term of his Natural Life*. Clarke wrote a number of short stories and would probably have done work which would have ranked him high, but he died at the age of thirty-five, worn out by hard work and worry. The next writer of moment was T. H. Browne who, under the name of Rolf Boldrewood, wrote of the life he knew well, for he was squatter, police magistrate, goldfield warder; and his *Robbery under Arms*, a story of the notorious bushranger, Captain Starlight, became well known not only in Australia but in Britain.

Another novelist who belongs mainly to last century is Joseph Furphy (1843-1912). His outstanding work—some say his only really important one—is *Such is Life*. He himself called the book "offensively Australian," and certainly it is completely belonging to the life there.

Three women writers who also dealt with life on the stations: the novels of "Brent of Bin Bin," despite a difficult and clumsy style, form a long saga of the up-country life; Miles Franklin deals in the same material; and Aeneas Gunn who has recorded her own reactions to the bush life.

By far the greatest of all Australian novelists is Henry Handel Richardson, who was really Henriette Richardson and who later married Professor Robertson, German Professor at London University, and came to London to live. *Maurice Guest* (1908) established her reputation, and then her great trilogy, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, which followed at intervals during the next twenty years, was finally issued as a whole in 1930. As she wished, her writing was accepted as the work of a man, though it was tremendously sensitive. It was deeply concerned with music, and, as all too rarely happens, showed a real knowledge and understanding of that art. *Young Cosima*



was published in 1939, for she wrote slowly, taking the utmost pains with her work. She died in 1946.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century there has been a steady stream of efficient novel writing, the best of it exploiting the specific Australian scene and situation. The name of Vance Palmer stands high. *The Swayne Family* is probably his best-known book, a family saga of the type of Galsworthy's Forsyte books, it deals with the cities rather than with the wide open spaces which are the scene of so much writing, and which was exploited by Palmer in his own early work, such as *Men are Human*. He is always concerned with psychology rather than with action. Kylie Tennant is another novelist who vacillates between country and city. *The Battlers* in 1941 and *Last Haven* in 1946 dealing with the country, whilst *Ride on, Stranger*, which came between, was a city book. Frank Davison, the writer of *Man-shy*, gives vivid pictures of life in the wilds of Queensland with the cattle. Elinor Dark, whose father, Dowell O'Reilly, was a fine short-story writer, is one of the best contemporary novelists, and in *The Timeless Land* she turned her gifts to a study of the first settlers and their struggles.

The laurels to-day go almost certainly to another woman, Katherine Prichard, who in *Working Bullocks* tells the story of the timbermen, and in *Coonardoo* the drought and loneliness of an outback station.

Of the younger school Xavier Herbert should be mentioned. His *Capricornia* is a study of racial clashes in Northern Australia and is written with modern ultra-realism and bitterness. Leonard Mann wrote one important novel of the First World War, *Flesh in Armour*, and in *Mountain Flat* has made a study of the conflict of man with the earth.

An exciting newcomer in Australian fiction is Catherine Gaskin. She is still in her early thirties and has already seven books to her credit, and one of these has sold over a million copies. It is a book about life in Australia in the period 1790-1800, concerning a woman who came over to that world as a transported convict and by the power of her personality proved herself a worthy pioneer and colonist. The research which the authoress put into this historic background and her sense of character suggests that in Catherine Gaskin Australia may have found a successor to Henry Handel Richardson. *Sara Dane*, as she calls her novel, has been published in England.

As we have seen the encouragement of the short story form by the newspaper and magazine press of Australia has given prominence to this art. The best of the novelists and the poets have nearly all written good short stories. They are too numerous to mention individually, but an excellent selection was made some years ago by Walter Murdoch and H. Drake-Brockman and published in *The World's Classics* by the Oxford University Press. An anthology of poetry which should be consulted is



*An Australasian Anthology* compiled by Percival Serle. Another is by Henry Mackenzie Green : *Modern Australian Poetry*. Mr. Green has also written a most useful small résumé of Australian literature of this century which is published by the Cambridge University Press.

Judith Wright, herself one of Australia's poets, has recently published with the Oxford University Press *A Book of Australian Verse*, which excellently covers the wide ground of the poetry of the Commonwealth.

Professor E. Morris Miller's excellent *Australian Literature*, first published to bring the story up to 1940 has now been revised to include a further ten important years until 1950. *Australia Writes*, edited by T. Inglis Moore, is another most useful anthology. The anthology form finds support and evokes scholarship in Australia.

Conditions in Australia have so far not favoured the creation of a literary drama : the theatre was not sufficiently founded before the rise of the cinema, and such theatres as exist look too markedly to visiting companies from Britain. In these circumstances few authors will write for the stage. The amateur stage has given opportunity for a few writers of one-act plays, such as Louis Esson and Douglas Stewart, who writes for stage and radio and is a considerable poet.

Essayists also have small standing, despite the literary consciousness and excellence of the best Australian newspapers, which extend their province beyond that of mere purveyors of news. The one essayist of outstanding merit is Walter Murdoch who is the doyen of Australian writers, a retired professor of literature in one of the Australian universities, and a scholar of note. Mention should also be made of Norman Lindsay, artist, satirist, novelist and one of the liveliest of critical minds.

It is necessary to realise that Australia is essentially a young country, chiefly concerned so far with the practical problems of building up her material civilisation, but with a future of incalculable importance which will certainly include a fine literature of her own.

## § 2

### SOUTH AFRICAN WRITING

The literature of South Africa has given us at least two outstanding women writers whose names are part of world literature. One is Olive Schreiner, one of the first consciously feminist writers with an artistic standard as well as a sociological one, whose *Story of an African Farm*, published in 1883, created a sensation for the freedom and daring of its thought on religion, morals and the relationship of the sexes and the economic subjection of women. The other is the modern writer Sarah



Gertrude Millin, whose biographies of Rhodes and of General Smuts place her in the first rank of contemporary biographers, while her *History of the War* makes a literary as well as a historical contribution to the already vast literature on that subject. Alongside these is her purely creative work as a novelist, with the study of the treatment of the native races, *God's Step-Children* (1924), an example of the thesis novel which has not been allowed to lose its value as a work of art. Mrs. Millin's books, the novels, histories and historical biographies, give us as complete a picture of South African life as we could wish, full of her own ideas upon the changing political scene in her country but expressed through her characters.

The mention of her great autobiography of General Smuts reminds us that the famous statesman was himself a writer of no inconsiderable power, and an orator of such brilliance and thoughtfulness that the published volumes of his speeches have a right of place in the ranks of literature. It might be recalled that in 1917 at a banquet given in his honour in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords as some recognition of the marvellous services he was rendering during the First World War, it was he who in one of his most famous speeches gave a new name to the British Empire, calling it "The British Commonwealth of Nations," a name since officially adopted. Nor should we forget that it was Smuts who really conceived and drew up the constitution of the League of Nations. These facts are important to our purpose here because his chief contribution to literature is his book *Holism*, written during the years when, after the 1914-1918 war, he was defeated in South African politics and expressed his hopes for the world in the working out of this philosophy of wholeness in which the conflicts between units, minor or major groups, and personalities, finds harmony in service of the whole race.

The other woman writer whom we have mentioned, Olive Schreiner (1862-1920), was equally concerned with the advancement of society, and gained world fame as one of the pioneers of feminism. It is well to remember that her *Story of an African Farm* was published in 1883, five years before Mrs. Humphrey Ward shocked the world of her day with *Robert Elsmere*, for Olive Schreiner's freethinking ideas were a part of the whole challenging of accepted values which her book put forth. It gave, too, an excellent picture of life in the colony as it then was. Her other outstanding book, *Trooper Peter Halkett*, published in 1897, was not nearly so remarkable although it was a good workmanlike performance. A volume of prose poems, *Dreams*, in which she put out her ideas on world affairs, especially her feminist ideas, enhanced the reputation she had as a literary propagandist.

Earlier than any of these writers, but not so important, was Thomas Pringle (1789-1834), who was already an author when he went out to the



Cape. His *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa* gives an interesting picture of the early colonial days. His novel, *The Bakuana Boy*, is a sympathetic study of the native problem. Pringle returned to England and became one of the most enthusiastic workers against slavery.

Of more recent novels those of Pauline Smith should be mentioned, *The Little Karoo* (1925) and *The Beadle* (1926).

One or two poets belong to nineteenth-century South Africa : Thomas Fairbairn, a friend of Pringle ; E. B. Watermeyer (1824-1867), a nature poet ; Alfred H. H. Bell, an enthusiastic imperialist. Arthur Shearly Cripps may perhaps be claimed for Africa to which he went as a missionary and which gave him the themes and inspiration for most of his poetry. On the other hand, Roy Campbell, South African by birth, left and became a European writer, settling in the South of France and identifying himself strongly with the local traditional life. His work, highly individualistic, avowedly anti-democratic and Nietzschean, is dealt with on pp. 775-776.

### § 3

#### LITERATURE IN CANADA

In Canadian writing we face again the phenomenon of a young nation, too eager and too occupied with the active business of living and wrestling with their vast prolific land to give time to culture in the European sense. Naturally, however, the passage of the years is altering this, and a growing literature on the European model but inspired by the Canadian scene and situation will inevitably arise.

The foremost writer, Mazo de la Roche, indeed, achieves this. She has written in leisurely fashion the brilliant family record of the Whiteoaks, and it has taken its place with those other family records of French, English, and German writers. Not least important, one part of the Whiteoaks saga has been dramatised, and has proved an enormous success on the British stage, so that many have turned to the books which were the source of this stage work. Mazo de la Roche was born in 1885, and before she began the Whiteoaks chronicles she had established a less entirely successful serial record in *Jalna* (1927). *Whiteoaks* itself followed two years later, and since then she has continued to produce fine work. Her short stories written around animal themes are noteworthy.

The other well-known Canadian name is that of the humorist, Stephen Leacock. The head of the department of political economy at McGill University and the author of several books on his scientific subject, Stephen Leacock published his *Literary Lapses* in 1910, his *Nonsense Novels* in 1911, and thereby established himself among the humorous writers.

Actually Canadian writing may be said to have started with humour



and to have established a method, for the first author of any standing was Thomas Chandler Haliburton (1796-1865) who, with *The Clockmaker; or the Sayings and Doings of Sam Slick of Slickville*, created a type which was afterwards so imitated in the United States that it is often thought that Haliburton himself was born south of the lakes. Actually he was a judge in Nova Scotia, and wrote in 1843 a book of the life there, *The Old Judge or Life in a Colony*. The Sam Slick books were published in 1837-38-40 and enjoyed an immense popularity.

John Richardson was the earliest novelist of any note, publishing in 1832 a novel, *Wacousta*, but the novel as a form did not for many years find a place in Canada though Mrs. Leprohon's *Antoinette de Mirecourt*, and the naturalist books of Mrs. Traill, especially *Lost in the Backwoods*, a story of managing and making do when cut off from the resources of civilisation, should be mentioned, as should *The Golden Dog*, by William Kirby, an outstanding novel of the nineteenth century.

In more recent times the name of Gilbert Parker stands to the credit of Canadian literature, for he was Canadian born in 1862, and although most of his work was done when he came to England, he often used the Canadian scene. *The Seats of the Mighty* (1896) was dramatised by its author. A Canadian novel of eminence was *When Valmond came to Pontiac*. Sir Gilbert, for he was knighted in 1902 and later created a baronet, wrote some magnificent history, from *The History of Old Quebec* (1903) to *The World in the Crucible*, a record of events which led to the First World War.

In poetry Canada has given us a number of minor writers, and two whose names are well known, Robert W. Service, an easy poet of the modern ballad school, and William Bliss Carmen, who is a lyrical writer and a nature poet. Robert Service has been called "the Kipling of Canada," his *Songs of a Sourdough* (1907) and *Rhymes of a Rolling Stone* having much of the Kipling quality of facility, simplicity, and sentiment. Bliss Carmen has a more lasting quality, though he, too, will write at times in the ballad strain. *Low Tide on the Grand Pré* (1893) contained some lovely pictures of the Canadian scene, as did a much later book, *Pipes of Pan*. Robert J. C. Stead has followed this tradition. He is also a novelist, his book, *The Homesteaders*, being one of the best pictures of Canadian farm life. He has earned for himself the title of the Poet of the Prairies with such volumes as *The Empire Builders* and *Prairie Born*.

His quality takes us back to that poet of last century, William Henry Drummond, who dealt with the lives of the French settlers in such stories as *The Habitant* (1897) or *Johnny Cointeau* (1901). Earlier still came Archibald Lampman (1861-1890) with delightful nature poetry in such volumes as *Among the Millet*, published in 1888. One other poet of the nineteenth century who should be mentioned is Charles Sangster, author



of *The St. Lawrence and the Sanguemay* (1856) and *Hesperus and Other Poems* (1860). The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse, edited by W. W. Campbell, himself a poet of standing, introduces us to a number of other men and women who have found their inspiration in the great land across the Atlantic.

## § 4

## INDO-ANGLIAN LITERATURE

Apart from the ancient classical literature of India (see Chapter V) and the more recent native writing in the various Indian languages, there came into being during the period when India was under British rule an impressive literature, Indian in thought but written in English by native Indian writers. Outstanding was Rabindranath Tagore, but we must remember that his work was invariably written first in Bengali and then in English, so that he is equally a Bengali modern classic and an Indo-Anglian one. His achievement is so outstanding that we are in danger of forgetting the other fine writers of the sub-continent who during the final years of last century and the first half of this have brought to fulfilment the ideal of that famous Minute by Macaulay on Indian educational hopes : "to make natives of this country good English scholars." Many are magnificent writers.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) became a popular author with world-wide fame. Born of a noble family, he was already publishing his work when he was fourteen, and by the beginning of the new century he was accepted as the greatest of Asian writers, with poetry, dramas, novels, short stories, and philosophical writings. In 1912 *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings) finally established his fame. The Nobel Prize went to him in 1913, and his visit to Europe was a triumphal progress. In 1915 he was knighted ; and later he established, after the Hindu fashion, a famous Asram, a centre of culture for his idealistic teaching.

Poetry has always been a foremost product of the Indian genius. The first name in this renaissance is that of Toru Dutt, the brilliant girl who published her first book in 1876. Toru Dutt, alas, died at twenty-one. The best known poetess is Sarojini Naidu, who after giving us a few volumes of exquisite poetry became entirely concerned with political affairs. *The Bird of Time* is probably her finest work. Tagore and Sarojini are outstanding, but there are many others in various departments of literature : the Brothers Ghose, especially Aurobindo, the poet, mystic, and philosopher ; Mulk Raj Anand, novelist, fighter for the downtrodden, and writer on art ; Ananda Coomaraswamy, who also expounds Indian art ; R. K. Narayan, the novelist ; and such figures as Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, and Krishnamurti, whose works are part of contemporary world literature.



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